ISSUE 44 • MAY 1991 £1.80

ACE

■ AMIGA ■ ST ■ PC ■
MEGADRIVE ■ GAMEBOY
■ SUPER FAMICOM ■

THE ULTIMATE GAMES MAGAZINE

ADVANCED COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

The Cutting Edge

SWITCHBLADE II

Gremlin Cracks Console-Quality Graphics on the Amiga

STATES OF PLAY

Exclusive report from the San Jose games developers' conference

ENTER THE CYBERZONE!

World's first VR gameshow

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Licence deals investigated

PLUS

6 Pages of Games and Tech News!

DESERT STORM

Exclusive pics of Psygnosis' CD marvel!

WIN!

Last Ninja 3 Outfits!

35 PAGE SCREENTEST SECTION: NINJA 3, ARMOUR-GEDDON, CYBERCON III, KILLING CLOUD, SUPER CARS 2, BRAT, LIFE AND DEATH II, TOKI, CHUCK ROCK, + LOTS MORE!

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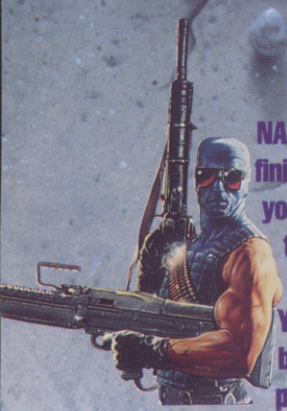
GOING OVE



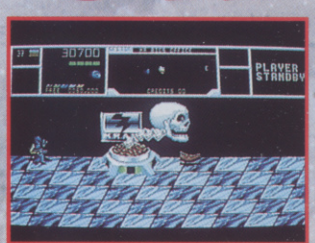
NARC The arcade action thriller with the BIG finish. Infiltrate the criminal underworld - your mission is to seek out and destroy the king pin of the MR BIG CORPORATION - if you get that far.

You'll have to outwit his enormous army of body guards... gangs of charisma-bypass patients in trench coats, the bullet brain with the build of a rhinoceros and the breath of a dung beetle, packs of vicious canine yappies, the psychotic clown with an evil sense of humour - you'll die, but not laughing! Then there's the gas guzzling cadillac jock - a cool specimen, elbow hanging on the door rail, a serious looking piece in his hand and ready to blow you away as he rolls down main street leaving you coughing lead. It's not all bad!... You've got a chopper to back you up, a mean, shiny street machine, some heavy metal hardware and some pretty neat moves. And what about the king pin... did I say he was Mr. Big? No, he's MR BIG!

The Arcade thriller takes you from the bright lights of Paris to the rugged terrain of the Sahara. Your mission is to track down, chase and apprehend the dangerous criminals. It's FASTER - explosive power sends you bulleting through various terrains - hold the line or plough the fields! It's TOUGHER - the criminals wield some heavy hardware - but so do you! You can shoot but you must dodge their flak... heavy gunfire, trucks unloading their cargo onto your bonnet... it's the meanest pursuit game to hit the micro screen.

The extra features will leave you gasping for extended play weather changes, bodyguard squads, grenade lobbing bikers, gun-choppers... just play it!... we dare you to stop!

FOR THE BEST IN S



AVAILABLE FOR YOUR : SPECTRUM . AMSTRAD
COMMODORE . AMIGA . ATARI ST

OCE

ER THE TOP

TOTAL RECALL

As Doug Quaid you have been haunted by recurring dreams of another life on Mars. You are drawn to Rekall Incorporated, a unique travel service specializing in implanting fantasies into the minds of those who desire to turn their dreams into reality. THE EGO TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Experience the horror as your dreams turn into hideous nightmares. Suddenly your every move is monitored by would-be assasins. You discover the surreal truth -

You're not you - you're me.

You must travel to Mars to discover your true identity - your mission is now a journey of non-stop action, strange mutants, futuristic vehicles and a startling array of weaponry all captured in superbly executed graphics and a game play that compliments the success of the year's top movie.

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ROBOCOP 2

EVEN IN THE FUTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT.

The future is a rough place Detroit is a bankrupt city...torn apart by the decadent forces of the Old Man and his corrupt corporation. If you want to die - then walk the streets, if you want to live - then pray for the return of Robocop!

Robocop 2 has justice in mind... a kind of justice only he can deliver! Take on Detroit's evil mastermind and his mega-corporation in some of the most action-packed scenes ever devised for maximum entertainment value. Detroit is falling apart - it's time to put it all back together!

HE'S BACK... TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT

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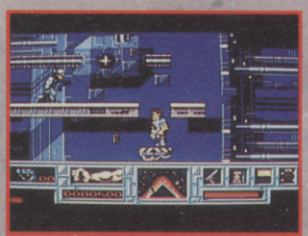
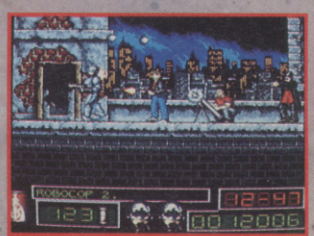
SOFTWARE ACTION





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"I said, 'A line will take us hours maybe;
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.'"

W.B. Yeats on the trials of writing a new scrolling routine.

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PRINTING Severn Valley Press, Caerphilly

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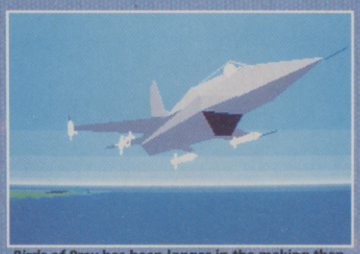
reviews

Our Screentest section extends to a glorious 35 pages this month, with the top games receiving depthy 3-page treatments.



***Birds of Prey* has been longer in the making than many games. Four years to be precise. See the results for yourself on page 18**

Brat* is one of the lucky recipient of our new 3-page review treatments. More depth! More details! More words! *(Screentest page 76)

Angel Studios. Page 32

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82 **WIZARDY VI** *Import*

The licensing game is complex and fraught with danger. The stakes are high the rewards can be huge. Like some enormous used-car auction, the rights of movie and coin-op licences are sold to the highest bidder for conversion into T-shirts, mugs, badges and computer software. But how are the deals secured? How much cash is involved? And why is the consumer still happy to fork out for a licensed game when he has had his fingers so badly burned in the past?

See page 25.

Major ACE, our fictional movie and comic star is ripe for licensing. But how would the softcos go about getting his name and producing his game?

The Developers' Conference in San Jose has yielded some interesting ideas and thrown up some thorny problems. The end of the Shoot-em-up? Read all about it on page 39

TIME OUT! **In a month regarded traditionally as a quiet time of year than most we've seen more releases than ever *(Screentest - Page 49)*. Perhaps we're heading for that nirvana-like state-of-affairs with a constant and regular flow of releases through the spring and summer months Such trials and tribulations must seem far off concerns to Argonaut, the team behind the four-years-in-the-making *Birds of Prey. (Feature - Page 18)* The timing of licence projects is perhaps the most crucial of all elements. Hundreds of thousands of pounds can be lost by missing a single deadline *(Feature page 25)*.And in the States, it's all about "quality" time. *(Feature page 39)*..**

NEW ORDER!

Browsing through this issue should be an even more pleasant experience than normal. We've sectionalised the magazine and moved all non-review & preview material into a new area at the front, offering around 20 pages of features' reading before the Screentest pages.

We hope this new order will heighten your enjoyment of the issue.

Psygnosis' venture into the world of compact disc games would appear to be more wholehearted than many UK rivals, but will all the graphics end up making a decent game? See Page 44

COVER STORY

Gremlin's *Switchblade II* is more of a step forward than may at first be apparent. It's a straightforward arcade blast featuring a central character pitted against a fantastic army of mechanoid warriors, handled in such a graphically excellent way as to make it unique. The programmers have achieved the look and feel of a console game so well, it could even have Famicom owners puzzled. Read the full story on page 50.

ACE

MAY 1991

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Argonaut, the team behind *Starglider II* have been working on *Birds of Prey* for nearly four years. And what have they got to show for it? Back to Prey School for Rik Haynes.

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Broadsword Productions, the people behind *Knightmare* and *The Satellite Game* are about to unleash a new kind of viewing on the unsus pecting public. We visit Anglia TV to learn more.

25 **THE NAME GAME**
£750,000 is not an inconsiderable amount of money, yet softcos are queueing up to pay sums like this to movie companies. Why?

28 **GAMESMAKER!**
The program Origin used to produce the 3D graphics for *Wing Commander* is now available for use in the home.

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The latest Stephen King movie, *Lawnmower Man* features the most advanced computer graphics ever. Read all about the film behind the film.

39 **DEVELOPERS' CONFERENCE**
This year's conference of some of the finest minds in games design convened in San Jose, and Steve Cooke was there to soak up the vibes and the rays.

44 **PSYGNOSIS' CD REALITY**
Amidst much talk about the potential for CD games from British software houses, Psygnosis have let their actions speak for themselves.

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7 **ACE GAMES NEWS**
Aliens 3 comes to the big screen and computer. *Vanilla Ice* and *McHammer* console games. The catchily-titled *Ultima 3D Dungeons* set to outdo *Dungeon Master. Jackie Chan* saves his sister. And *Seaweed Burgers* from McDonald's

11 **ACE TECH NEWS**
Skalextric turns Turtle with Skateboarding shell-dwellers. A holographic arrives coin-op from *Sega. Honey I Shrunk the Kids* theme park ride.

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Chests off-loaded, shoulder-chips removed, bit ter pills swallowed and scores settled.

76 **TRICKS'n'TACTICS**
Five pages of solutions, codes, cheats and hints for the best games of the moment.

89 **PINK PAGES**
Bargains, bargains bargains! Plus the Stockmarket, Public domain and hardware directory. No PP; no comment.

Psygnosis *and their Molecule Madness*

Against the clock, you use your chemical tendencies to build molecules out of atoms provided.

And don't be surprised if the very atom you *don't* need will be the one you're given to use next . . . Pray for a Joker Atom!

If you don't look like a mad scientist now, you will by the time you've tackled **ATOMINO!**

Up and Atom!

Screen Shots from the Amiga Version

PSYGNOSIS, FREEPOST, LIVERPOOL L3 3AB, UNITED KINGDOM

PSYGNOSIS

Ant farm

Maxis, the Californian games developer of Sim Earth and Sim City, is currently devising a fiendish game based around pet 'Ant Farms'. These strange goldfish tanks filled with sand and an ant colony could form the basis of a very amusing and absorbing game.

Ant Farm is being written on the Macintosh by Will Wright (author Sim City and Sim Earth). It will be released on Mac and PC when 'he's finished it'.

In the wake of last month's revelation about Kentucky Fried Chicken, ACE has uncovered plans at fast-food giant McDonald's to add a low-fat beefburger to the menu. The McLean Deluxe sandwich is about 25% less fattening than a Quarterpounder and includes a food additive made from seaweed. Get your gob ready for a taste-sensation, mate.

Everybody from Vanilla Ice to Freddy Krueger is getting into video games, reports Rik Haynes...

Aliens III

Our third encounter with the gruesome stomach-busting Aliens is currently in production and will be appearing early next year at a cinema near you. Console and computer game adaptions of Aliens III should be ready at the same time.

In the forthcoming movie, Ripley – again played by Sigourney Weaver – arrives on a peaceful mining planet and faces yet another battle with the deadly face huggin', body bustin' brutes... only this time she hasn't got any technology to back her up. The third in the popular SF film series is being directed by David Finch, who previously worked with Madonna on the noted Express Yourself and Vogue music videos. Respected movie-directors Ridley Scott (Bladerunner) and James Cameron (The Terminator) created the previous two Alien movies.

A spokesman for 20th Century Fox told us that Mirrorsoft is interested in the computer, console and CD game rights to Aliens III, although Mirrorsoft, when asked, were giving nothing away. ACE will keep all you fans of the Universe's favourite killing machines informed on any further developments.

Here comes the Hammer...

The world's top 'rappers', MC Hammer and Vanilla Ice, are putting their names to various video games due for release sometime later this year.

Tiger Electronics, an American company specialising in cheap electronic handheld LCD games, is producing two decks based on MC Hammer. This black rap artist – with hits like Can't Touch This, We Gotta Prey and Here Comes the Hammer – is touring the UK next month. At least three companies are clamouring for Nintendo rights to Hammer, but no-one has managed to pull-off a deal yet. In the meantime, Pepsi has reputedly paid him $8 million to star in a series of adverts and toy-manufacturer Mattel is making an MC Hammer doll.

Not to be left standing, white rap artist Vanilla Ice, who shot to fame a couple of months ago with the No.1 song Ice Baby, has signed a deal with THQ to produce a game on the Gameboy, Super Famicom and NES. Computer adaptions are unlikely because of the smaller market and older gameplayers.

Ice and Hammer can both trip the light fantastic, so dancing should play a major part in all these games.

Pop music is one of the great untapped frontiers for console and computer game licensing, as long as the previous disasters of Frankie Goes to Hollywood (Ocean) and Moonwalker (US Gold/Sega) remain forgotten. These video games appeal to younger people and have a great deal to offer the game designer in terms of both ready-made audio and visual material. Current pop-favourites for possible game tie-ins include Betty Boo, The Beatles, Happy Mondays and KLF. New Kids on the Block were signed up for an NES game last year, nothing has been seen since.

"We're looking into this whole side because of the CD-ROM area," says Geoff Heath, the European boss of Mindscape, "The deal with Rhythm King (the company behind Betty Boo and Renegade Software) will lead to a lot of things in due course. The possibilities are endless."

Heath is keen on the idea of CD-based systems being able to produce true multi-media pop-music products with CD-quality audio and digitised full-motion video. The 'game of the group' could be sitting comfortably alongside the music cassette, single, album and video of major music stars by the end of the decade.

Master of the Dungeons

If you thought *Dungeon Master* was the definitive cave caper, think again. Origin, the leading American games developer behind *Wing Commander*, is now working on a '3D Dungeons' version of *Ultima* – the award-winning fantasy role-playing game-world.

Currently with no proper working title, the product will incorporate the most impressive 3D graphics yet seen in this style of game.

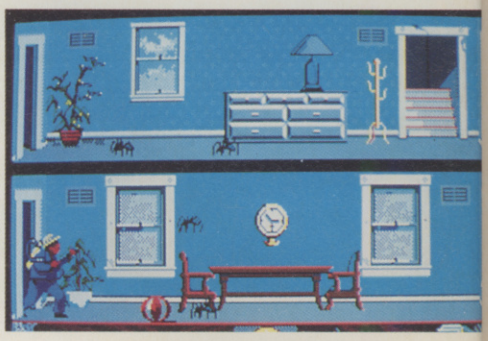
In the highly-successful *Dungeon Master* from FTL and Mirrorsoft, the display of the caves and monsters were just simulated 3D. '*Ultima 3D Dungeons*' will have proper three-dimensional graphics with real-time texture-mapping – a technique which places a hand-drawn bitmap image onto a computer-generated object. This means the walls of the dungeons will be made of photo-realistic stone textures complete with dripping water and slime. Another advantage with full-3D is that the dungeons can be viewed from any angle. All these images will look as though some poor artist has meticulously hand-rendered every single frame of animation.

"This is bigger than any other Dungeon game I've seen," says Chris Roberts at Origin. Sadly, it looks as though '*Ultima 3D Dungeons*' will remain a dedicated PC game because of the complexity of the code.

"You'll be wandering around dungeons, beating the hell out of monsters and finding stuff," Roberts enthuses, "It will be more cerebral than *Dungeon Master*. We're going for a look and effects which make you feel as if you're there. There will be nothing on-screen to remind you that you're playing a computer game. If you want to 'interact' with an object on-screen you just click on it. Our auto-mapping is really cool. It's drawn on parchment scrolling and it looks like you've been drawing your own map using a quill pen."

The technology in the game is just about finished, Origin is now ready to start designing the gameplay. Keep reading ACE for more updates on '*Ultima 3D Dungeons*' in the coming months

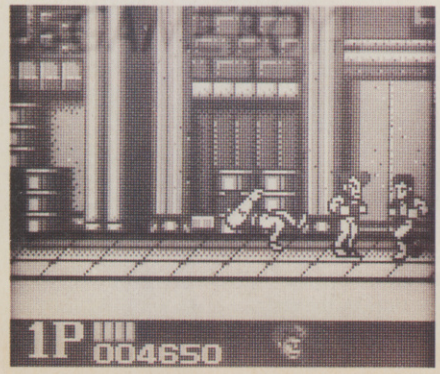
Calling all potential Police cadets. That tacky collection of Police Academy movies is about to hit silicon. Tengen, part of the Atari Games coin-op company, has a summer release in mind for this wacky adventure comedy game which follows the exploits of the goofy characters from the Warner Bros movies. The object of the Police Academy video game, for Tackleberry (the gun happy psychopath), Lt. Callahan and the other crazy cadets, is to save Commandant Lassard's prize possession... his goldfish! No other versions are currently planned.



Arachnophobia is a computer game inspired by the recent Steven Spielberg produced spider movie. In the game you hunt down deadly South American spiders who have invaded a sleepy town in California. Investigate hundreds of houses, schools, buildings, barns and cemeteries. Rescue helpless citizens. Battle thousands of soldier spiders. This web of intrigue is available next month on the Amiga, PC and ST courtesy of Titus and Entertainment International. This screenshot reminds us of the brilliant competitive two-player Spy vs Spy games from First Star.

Enter the Dragon

It seems video games are all the rage in the special effects studios of Hollywood. *Super Mario Bros*, and now *Double Dragon*, are being turned into films by firms eager to cash-in on their popularity among 'teen' audiences. What will be next? Even the pervie PC game *Leisure Suit Larry* could be turned into a big-screen extravaganza.



Both 'game movies' are currently in production and should be released later next year. *Double Dragon* is being produced by LA-based Imperial Entertainment. Tradewest obtained the video game and film licensing rights to this successful Japanese martial arts coin-op in 1987. The family-run company is one of the largest Nintendo licensees in America.

Double Dragon is currently available on the Gameboy, Amiga, PC, ST and NES. ACE will be bringing you further reports from behind the scenes in the next few months.

ACTIVISION

Is a pitfall coming ?

As troubled American software house Activision is bought by The Disc Company, news reaches ACE that one of the most successful games ever produced by the veteran Californian company may be converted to the Nintendo Super Famicom.

Pitfall was first released on the old Atari VCS console ten years ago and could be described as the forerunner of the Super Mario Bros-style of arcade adventure. It will be very interesting to see how the Super Famicom programmers change the very basic gameplay and graphics of the original Pitfall to suit the sophisticated tastes of today's gameplayers. Details on the new version are very scarce at the moment.

Veronique Gardy, Marketing Manager at Disc Company Europe, could neither confirm or deny the rumour that Pitfall is being converted to the Super Famicom as this magazine went to press. "Activision is being totally reorganised at the moment," she said. Part of this reorganisation entails the complete closure of Activision's British offices in Reading. European operations are now being handled from Paris in France.

ACE hopes that the new-look Activision will continue to produce quality games like Cosmic Osmo, Millennium 2.2 and Aliens in the future. Though if Activision really wants to turn a back-catalog game into a Super Famicom title, why choose Pitfall? Pastfinder, a playable vertically-scrolling shoot'em-up released on the C64 in the mid-80s, would make a far better game.

What classic games would you like to see converted to the Super Famicom, Megadrive and Gameboy consoles? Write into ACE at the usual address and we'll print the requests with the best pitch for conversion.

JACKIE CHAN

Remember this star of low-budget 1970's martial arts movies? Somebody did. Japanese games powerhouse Hudsonsoft has launched Jackie Chan's Action Kung-Fu on the Nintendo Entertainment System and NEC PC Engine consoles. Can you kick-it?

In the game, players take the role of Jackie as he rescues his sister and saves China by defeating the Sorcerer and his evil monsters. Jackie is no wimp and can perform 180°/360° spin-kicks, issue sky/ tornado attacks and throw psycho waves. Along the way you must face the mad martial, buddhadoma, nyudo monster, combat spider and shaolin giant. Fortunately, your master will help guide you through this action-packed ordeal.

Mr Chan isn't the first big-screen kung-fu hero to be turned into a video game. Bruce Lee was seen on the Commodore 64 and Atari 800 micros in the early 1980s and playing on the PC by the end of the decade courtesy of Datasoft and Mindscape. To our knowledge there has never been a Chuck Norris beat'em-up. Do you know any better?

Falcon 3

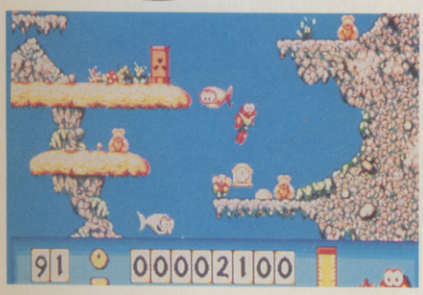
That's right, Spectrum Holobyte and Mirrorsoft are ready to fly their third F-16 flight simulation on the PC. So what's new?

A full-function flight-sim, *Falcon 3* contains a whole host of fresh and enhanced features including: realistic 3D terrain based on real-life topographical world maps of Kuwait, Panama and Israel; total of 270,000 square miles of active fighting area; 'high-fidelity' option (even better graphics) for players with maths co-processors; 'black-box' replay feature if your PC is equipped with EMS; two-players connected by cable or modem can dogfight, fly as leader and wingman, or go off on separate assignments.

"This new release of the award-winning program will take fighter simulations to a new level of realism for personal computers," predicts Spectrum Holobyte.

The first *Falcon* game has even been turned into a training aid for the U.S. military! No price has been set for the PC (286 or faster machines) version of *Falcon 3*. The game supports VGA and EGA graphics adaptors and AdLib, SoundBlaster, Roland and PS/1 soundboards. Conversions to the Amiga and ST are unlikely because of the immense complexity of the code. The original version has just been converted to the CDTV.

Falcon 3 is the premier product in Spectrum Holobyte's Electronic Battlefield Series (EBS). The second, *Avenger A-10*, should be here in the autumn. The two games can be played together via direct-connect cable or modem, allowing players to fly joint missions on the same battlefield. EBS can also be used by a network of up to 30 players. You could be playing with pilots from around the world. This is your chance to pit your skills against players in Iraq, Soviet Union and Brazil. Do you think you're good enough?



James Pond, the fish-faced secret agent, is now appearing on the Sega Megadrive thanks to Millennium and Electronic Arts. The Japanese-inspired multi-level platform romp has been converted by the original Amiga programmer Chris Sorrell and his friend Steve Bak (better known for his scrolling efforts in the early days of ST games). Priced at a monstrous £40, James Pond is the latest Amiga game to be sucked through EA's megafast Megadrive conversion process. Who can forget the adaptions of Battle Squadron and Sword of Sodan? Thankfully, in the latter's case, we have.

A Nightmare on Elm Street

This ain't no game for the faint-hearted. The scary series of horror flicks starring the steel-clawed menace Freddy Krueger have been turned into an interactive adventure on the NES by LJN in the States.

Something frightening has been happening on Elm Street lately. A horrible nightmare has come true. Teenagers in the neighbourhood are mysteriously passing away in the dark stillness of night. It's up to you and your remaining friends to search Elm Street for the scattered bones of Freddy Krueger, the cause of all this misery. But can you burn his remains in the School furnace before you fall asleep?

If fighting for survival against Freddy baby is too much for you to handle, don't worry, this is a NES Satellite compatible cartridge. With it you can call on three friends for help and the four of you can simultaneously accept the challenge. Mr Krueger would prefer four victims anyway!

Four player console games are now in high-demand among American and Japanese punters. Look out for the four-player versions of Gauntlet II on the NES from Mindscape and Nintendo's own F1 racing-sim on the Gameboy.

NEWS GAMES NEWS GAMES

HOME ALONE

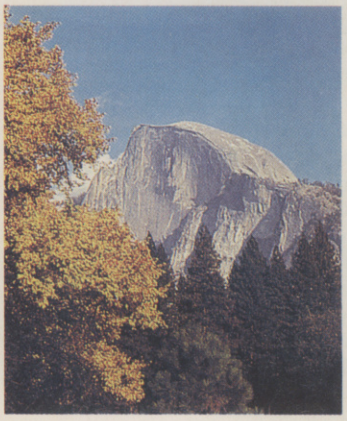
This smash-hit movie comedy about a streetwise kid accidentally left to guard the house against burglars while his parents are away on holiday, is forming the basis for a Super Famicom, Gameboy and NES game from THQ in September. All three games will be based around the concept of the movie. "We're moving like mad to get everything done," confirms a spokesman for THQ. There will also be a sequel to the movie, appropriately titled Home Alone Again – due to reach the big-screen next year.

Twin Peaks

Some bad news for fans of this cult American TV-show. Hi-Tech Expressions in the States has decided to scrap plans for a video game based around Twin Peaks.

And now some very bad news for avid viewers of the surreal soap from movie maverick David Lynch, the guy behind Eraserhead, Blue Velvet and Dune. It seems the third series of Twin Peaks has been cancelled by the American television networks because of low-ratings. Couch potatoes will have to make the most of Tuesday nights watching BBC2 while they still can.

And finally for the very, very bad news. Instead of a video game based around Twin Peaks, Hi-Tech Expressions has opted to license the world's most famous glamour toy. Barbie - The Video Game will be specifically targeted towards young girls aged between 4 and 11 years-old. The company hopes to have it out on the NES before the beginning of 1992.



Far be it for ACE to prejudge a game before we've seen it, but the whole idea stinks. Before Outraged of Eastbourne writes into us, don't forget Epyx tried the same thing with a Barbie computer game in the mid-80s – and failed miserably. Sure, there are more girl gamesters on the NES, but think about it, why bother with a video game where the only entertainment value comes from changing Barbie's outfits. Well, on the other hand...

At least Hi-Tech Expressions is redeeming itself with a NES adaption of Tom and Jerry, currently in development and due in the fourth quarter of 1991.

That's Entertainment

Entertainment International, the Basildon-based games company, has a whole bundle of goodies on the way.

***Volfied*, a Taito coin-op, is a 16-level shoot'em-up. Players go round either destroying aliens or blocking their path in a group of mazes. *Volfied* is already out on the PC Engine, with Amiga, Gameboy and ST conversions being handled by Oxford Digital Enterprises.**

***Eye of the Storm* is a massive strategy-type space-flight game by Jason Kingsley, the geezer behind *Murder* for US Gold and the computer graphics in Adamski's *Killer* video. Out soon-ish on the Amiga, PC and ST.**

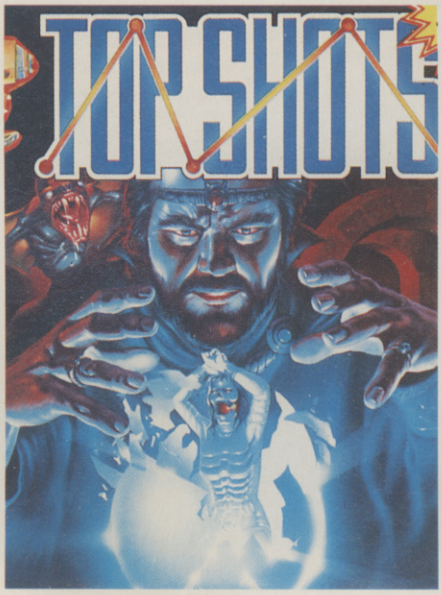
***Jules Verne's Space 1889* should appeal to the 'thinking' gamesplayer. Available in July on 16-bit computers, this release is based on a RPG from Game Designers Workshop and licensed from strategy-specialist Paragon Software in America. Say El; "*Space 1889* is amazingly big with hours and hours of playtime. It's kind of like *Megatraveller One* but with a different control system."**

Budget Day For Anco

Anco, publishers of the Most Popular Footy Game of All Time, Kick Offs 1 & 2 have announced their new budget label, Top Shots.

The first three releases on the label are *Spherical,* (an arcade adventure originally published by Rainbow Arts), *Strip Poker* (speaks for itself) and of course, everyone's favourite, *Kick Off.*

The games are priced at £7.99 for the Amiga and ST and are in the shops.....now!



Knightmare

In a rather smart move, Mindscape has decided to adapt the game-system from the award-winning *Captive* RPG for use in new game.

"We're taking the storyboard, characters and atmosphere of *Knightmare* and putting them into a *Captive* game environment," says Phil Harrison, Software Development Manager at Mindscape. "*Knightmare* is the most popular kids quiz-show on television. Activision did a less-than-successful game a few years back. Our game is more puzzle-orientated than *Captive*. We're also doing different language versions in French, German and Italian."

ACE is sure we'll be seeing more revamped titles based around popular games-systems and user interfaces in the months to come. It's also good news for players because it should encourage programmers to concentrate on bigger, better and more intuitive games-systems and interfaces instead of hastily reinventing the wheel every time round.

Ground Commander

Chris Roberts and the boffins at Origin are currently developing some super-advanced programming routines for a game which is set to beat even the mighty Wing Commander in terms of graphics, gameplay and movie-type presentation.

"Initially, we were thinking about doing a car combat game," reveals Roberts, "then we decided on an air/combat simulator set 20 years into the future would be a lot more interesting.

"The world is slowly grinding towards an economic collapse. The USA is fragmented into four or five different countries. There's a lot of conflict going on. Corporations are more powerful than governments. There's a whole new meaning to a hostile takeover – people go in there and attack with aircraft and tanks.

"You're part of a five-person air mercenary unit selling your services to the highest bidder. Kind of like the Wild Bunch with a dash of the A-Team meets Top Gun and Mad Max. The two most valuable commodities around are technology and oil. Not many people have the know-how, machinery or spares to fix things. People still fly hi-tech fighter planes like Harrier jumpjets and F-16 fighters, but these break-down all the time. They're moving back towards planes like the P-51 Mustang which are far more reliable.

"There will be a range of aircraft to fly in the game. You decide what planes and munitions to buy. The choices won't be intimidating – we want you to buy into this fiction. We've got a real movie-like plot, you do all the fun things and none of the boring bits.

"Currently dubbed Ground Commander, the game will feature our most photo-realistic graphics to date. All the buildings will have brick textures and doorways. You'll see ripples on the water and detailed hay-fields. The images will have real-time Gouraud light-source shading and texture-mapping for the first in a computer game."

All the excellent features of Wing Commander 2 (animated movie sequences, tension-metered music scores, sampled speech with SoundBlaster, and so on) are being enhanced and expanded. The cyber-punk Ground Commander should be released on the PC in October. Get a move-on Origin, we can't wait that long!

THE NEWS TECHNEWS

From holographic arcade games to video drugs, Rik Haynes investiagtes the latest tecnho gadets from Japan and USA...

Time Warner, the American media and entertainment group, is planning a 150-channel two-way interactive cable global TV system for Europe, USA and Japan. Making use of the latest in fibre-optic technology, subscribers will get round-the-clock access to pay-per-view movies, home-banking, teleshopping, personal computer links, fax transmission, voice interactive services and personal communications networks. The new network clears the way for niche television programming including educational, entertainment and ethnic broadcasts. Time Warner, the second biggest cable operator in the States, is now looking for European and Japanese partners. The system should be up and running by 1993.

SEGA develops holographic coin-op

Japanese video game giant Sega is set to unveil a remarkable coin-op utilising holographic visual technology at this year's ACME (American Coin Machine Exposition) in Las Vegas.

Holographic displays have been the dream of science fiction writers for the past thirty years. Today, thanks to pioneering work in American universities, fiction is fast becoming science fact.

Details of the revolutionary arcade game are scarcer than a D-Notice but ACE has found out Sega has licensed the game from a company in the States. We hope to have the full story next month.

Video drugs

A dangerous new video craze is sweeping through the cybernation and sleazy bars of Japan. Tokyo-based Ask Storytellers have devised a 'legal drug experience' with a computer-generated video that gets you high just by looking at it.

Your brain really takes the strain. Trips range from making you feel as though you've just had a massage to seriously screwing around with your head.

Apparently, the subversive images make your head spin and give you an odd feeling under your nose! Well-known Japanese artist Ryotsuke Jimon and house musicians Greater Than One have produced the abnormal audio-visuals in Video Drug One – which comes on video (¥3800/£15) and laserdisc (¥4800/£19).

Hey kids, don't forget video drugs really give you a headache.

Small wonder

Visitors to Walt Disney World in Florida are in for a small surprise this summer thanks to the Honey I Shrunk the Kids Movie Set Adventure which has just opened in the Disney-MGM Studios theme-park.

This new attraction, based around the hit comedy-film, shrinks you into the movie where ants are the size of ponies and grass is as tall as telegraph poles. The gigantic scaled back-yard play-area has made a 'big' impression on kids thanks to three-story tall blades of grass, lifeboat-sized cereal bits and a 20-foot tall paper clip. You can also see how the very special effects in the original movie were actually created.

When's the best time to visit? Walt Disney World theme-park hours fluctuate in accordance with anticipated business. The busiest days at the Disney-MGM Studios are Wednesday to Friday. Weekends are the least busy days. If your travel plans can't accommodate a weekend stay, consider visiting Disney-MGM earlier in the week, Epcot Centre and the Magic Kingdom later in the week.

Disney has opted for the easy option and produced a theme-park ride with giant scenery rather than shrinking unsuspecting visitors!

• *Sierra On-Line, the American adventure games developer, has started a new BBS (Bulletin Board Service) and phone hint-line service for British gamesters. You require a 300/1200/2400 baud modem to access the BBS on 0734 304227 or you can call the 24-hour hint-line service using a touch-tone phone on 0734 303171.*

Racing cars are no longer enough for Scalextric!

Turtles take to the tracks

Remember the days of the Scalextric racing club after school on a Wednesday afternoon? Johnny, Creasy and Podge would each bring a piece of track and 'Sir' would supervise the heated Formula One races.

Sadly, kids don't want classic cars these days. They'd rather have Knight Rider, Spiderman and Batman Scalextric sets. And to add insult to injury, Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles tracks have arrived.

"The sets are so fresh from the sewer they have specially moulded green tracks," confides Scalextric, "They include a turtle shell logo on the starting line and feature the characters and vehicles that have made the cartoon series and film famous.

The first set, Turtle Power (£59.99), features Michelangelo on his skateboard who is battling it out against an evil foot soldier around a large oval track. Shredder's Revenge (£69.99) pits the evil Shredder against Leonardo who rides his motorised skateboard. "The totally radical layout consists of a wide oval with two crossovers," Scalextric reveals. The final set, Turtles To The Rescue (£79.99), consists of an off-set oval of track and the wacky Party Wagon with its distinctive aerofoil, radar, antennae and guns. This new vehicle, with 'magna-traction' to give it faster cornering capabilities, races against a bright yellow 4x4 truck.

You can also individually buy any of the figures or vehicles and expand each set. "Turtle Power, Shredder's Revenge and Turtles to the Rescue are the greatest way to capture the action and adventure of those amazing heroes in half-shells," reckons Scalextric. It all sounds turtley tacky to us.

• *The Science Museum. Home to our greatest technological achievements. The jet engine. The Apollo 10 Spacecraft. Nike shoes? See just how far trainers have travelled, from a single original design right up to the revolutionary Air 180. 'Running on Air', the Nike Exhibition of Sports Shoe Technology, is on the first floor at the Science Museum, Exhibition Road, London SW7 from March 8 to May 10.*

If you're ever stuck in traffic, just whip out your IQ-8000 and knock-up a brilliant game of *Space Invaders* using the BASIC programming card.

Power in the hand

Forget filofax fiddling, the new IQ-8000 handheld electronic gadget from Sharp is supposedly the most powerful and versatile organiser on the market. "Unfortunately it doesn't make coffee, but we're working on it," laughs Sharp.

This wonder widget costs just under £200, weighs less than 300g and features a full QWERTY keyboard, large LCD screen and up to 128K of memory. Information stored inside it can be transferred to a PC or Macintosh for even more advanced fiddling.

The IQ-8000 series has been designed to make full use of a growing range of useful IC cards covering everything from eight-language translators to Time Expense Managers. An IC (Integrated Circuit) is a clever credit-card sized cart with built-in memory and battery back-up. They're paving the way for a whole bunch of useful gadgets, such as 'smart' credit cards, which can fit in your top pocket and remember your last zillion financial transactions.

Sharp decks are for power people who need their telephone numbers and diary dates in secretive electronic form rather than on paper for anyone to see. IQ-8000s are available through all leading high-street stores or call Freephone 0800 262958 for further information.

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Of *Corporation*, ***ACE said:*** "Probably the most influential game of this genre making this an essential addition to your collection. ***Zero said:*** If you liked Dungeon Master you'll lurve this.

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Amiga Format said: "An excellent adventure... witty, cunning and just plain good fun! If you liked Fish! you'll probably like this, because they're very similar in style: you may even prefer *Myth*, it's that good!" **CU 90%, Amiga Format 87%, TGM 85%, Crash 91%**

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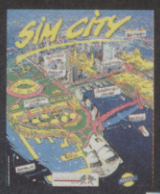

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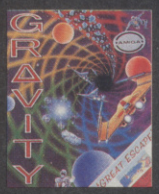

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letters

A LITTLE CONSOLATION

Why oh why is there so much bloody console coverage? Consoles are the tool for narrow minded gamers whose only aim in their games is 'kill the evil sorceror', or 'rescue your mindless girlfriend from the nasty mean, drug crazed gangs'. As their mindless Japanese shoeboxes have no keyboards, they will never (unless of course they wake up from their madness and buy an Amiga) enjoy the pleasures of Adventure games, or the Sierra series (*LL123, King's Quest* etc).

Granted, they have a very effective 'arcade' for their very own, but as you cannot create backups, you're 'arcade in your home' becomes very limited, and as most console games are either beat-em-ups or shoot-em-ups, you will soon solve them and become bored with them.. Now this doesn't happen in such games as *Leisure Suit Larry and Co*, because there are endless possibilities to better yourself and achieve the high score etc. So when you're bored of *Final Fight* or whatever you're currently playing, it's down Boots with nigh-on 40 quid in your pocket ready to go away for a fortnight of playing and so on. Don't get me wrong, I don't think these machines are terrible and should not be reported in any way at all. Just cut their articles down a bit and get your priorities right. The Amige and maybe ST are the ways forward (with VR of course!) and the Megadrive, in my humble opinion, is not. And together with CD, the future has never looked better for the Amiga and ST.

Daniel Pepper
Avon

It appears that your argument is not actually with the consoles, but more with arcade games in general. Since the consoles were only intended to offer home arcade entertainment, it seems a little unfair to criticise them for failing to cater for adventure games. We're happy to cover all advances in computer entertainment. We neither cater for beat-em-up, simulation or adventure fans alone. Instead we explain the limitations and benefits of each machine and each game relevant to its genre. As the popularity of consoles grows, so will our coverage, but never at the expense of our Amiga, ST and PC readers.

If you've got a point of view you wish to express, a question you'd like answered or a gripe about the software business in general, write to: Jim Douglas, ACE magazine, EMAP Images, Priory Ct, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, EC1R 3AU.

THE PRICE OF ACCURACY

Firstly I want to start off by saying what a right load of rubbish I think this entire business of raising the price of ACE is just for the fact that it is to be printed on deluxe paper. Quite frankly, if you ask me it's just a crude effort to deepen your own pockets, anyway, I couldn't care less if this letter was printed on recycled toilet paper.

Now, to the point. I have been buying your magazine for over a year now and I am glad to say that ACE is just the best multi-format computer games magazine available. The thing that I want to point out is the way your final reviews, although very informative and descriptive are completely ignorant to the specified machines capabilities. This has become quite evident in the past few months. It is fully illustrated in your "harshness" toward the ST when you review its software on the same page as the Amiga. Especially when you keep stressing (in the pink pages) about the difference in the two machine's hardware, eg different palette sizes, difference in sound quality, number of sprites, etc.

Also, don't you think it is a little unfair to give an eight-bit format game a lower rating than a sixteen-bit format game, just because your basic eight-bit can't possibly compare to your friend's technically superior sixteen bit?

In my opinion, your individual ratings are based on the best format for each game, usually on the Amiga. Would it not be fairer to base your ratings on the best that the machine can manage instead of a completely different machine's potential?

I'd also like to point out that you are reviewing too many sixteen bit games. I haven't seen a full eight-bit review for ages.

Van Dieu
Penge

I'm sorry you're unhappy with the price/paper change. Without wishing to break out the mournful violins, it is worth mentioning that ACE had remained at its £1.60 mark for nearly a year-and-a-half, despite escalating costs, and the 20p increment was simply necessary to finance the new paper.

Your concerns about our reviewing methods are interesting, but ultimately unfounded. Each game is reviewed bearing in mind the abilities of the machine. However, it would be unfair not to recognise the exploitation of the potential of superior computers in the overall mark. For example, although an ST game may be virtually identical to its Amiga counterpart, the scrolling limitations of the former machine may hamper gameplay.

The Pink Hardware Pages are intended to be used as a buying tool for readers planning to change machines. They wouldn't be serving their purpose if they didn't mention the drawbacks and benefits of each computer covered.

PROGRAMMERS PROBLEMS

I'm currently designing a game with AMOS and once finished, I'll send it to a software house to see if they will market it. However, I have some questions which hopefully you may be able to answer:

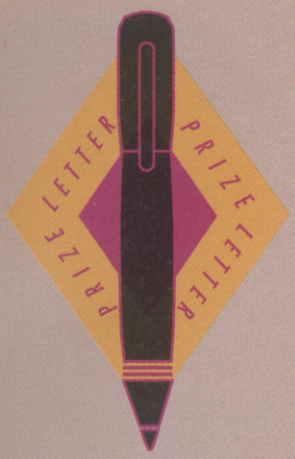
1) I have created some original characters and incorporated them into my game. How do I go about copyrighting them so they cannot be copied by others and how much would this cost? Also, is it possible to copyright character names and the title of the game.

2) Before I send my finished software to a publisher, will I need to produce some type of documentation, or will the company involved do this for me?

Any advice you could give would be gratefully appreciated.

N. Hardy
Sheffield

Good news! The moment you've finished creating your characters (so long as they in themselves are original) they are already your copyright. The same applies to the name of the game. However, you can't copyright items or words consid-



ered to be "public". If your game involved a policeman, for example, and was called Cop Chase, you couldn't take any action against another publisher whose games featured policemen or had the words "Cop" or "Chase" in the title, providing that their renditions of the characters were sufficiently different from your own. It is, of course, vital to be able to prove your creation of the characters took place on a certain date, in case your game isn't published, but someone lifts the idea for themselves.

It is best to supply some reasonable documentation of the game for the softco, as it helps them understand more easily what the game is about. Since most companies receive hundreds of unsolicited games each month for evaluation, it's important you make it as painless as possible for them to test your game.

STILL SOUNDS FAMILIAR

I read Roger Musson's letter in the April issue of ACE with interest and agree with almost everything he said. However, he did not state that it is often a company's own doing if their game is reviewed months in advance of the finished product hitting the shelves. It is a company, after all, who distributes their review copies to various magazines. Therefore the mags do not take the blame if a game is delayed by unforseen circumstances, as the reviewing staff are only doing the job they are paid to do.

However, I believe that some companies are milking the hype they inevitably receive if their products get rave reviews. For example, *UMS 2* featured in ACE in February 1990 and your readers were assured the product would be released within weeks. A batch of advertisements did little to dispel this theory, and then the game practically vanished without trace, until now.

This must have cost Rainbird loads of money, although it's not the only culprit. I find it really annoying how companies can waste money in this way when it could easily have been put to better use, perhaps by funding a future project.

Stuart Neil
Wales

WHY CAN'T I EXPERIMENT?

I know most magazines don't like printing anonymous letters, but I hope you'll make an exception in my case – as I think you'll see it would be rather embarrassing if people I work with found out who I am.

Basically, I've been in the games programming business for six years and I'm 'right p***ed off'. No, it's not because I don't get paid enough – I don't, but who does? And no, it's not because my unscrupulous publisher constantly rips me off (he does, but who doesn't). Nor is it because I have to work excessively long and antisocial hours (I do, but...). And finally (since I know ACE's Steve Cooke has a bee in his bonnet about this) no, it's not because I can't tell people at cocktail parties what I do for fear of frightening them away.

No, the reason I'm pissed (oops) off is that after six years the industry still hasn't got itself together enough to create an environment in which us games programmers can (a) enhance our self-esteem and (b) improve our work. What am I talking about? I'm talking about more basic programming research to be funded by software companies.

At the moment, the amount of research I do is pretty minimal – I spend most of my time coding for specific project dates. I do manage to play around, of course, as everybody does, and every so often I come across a routine or algorithm that I feel I can make good use of in a product. Sometimes, I even come up with something that you can base an entire game on (I could give you some examples, but that would give the game away, wouldn't it?).

What's frustrating is that I can never really progress the state of the art significantly in this situation. In fact, I'd even venture to suggest that my boss is not in the slightest bit interest in 'state of the art' and only in 'state of the sell'.

What do other programmers think? And what do you think?

(Name and address supplied)

Every creative worker in a commercial environment has this dilemma. Obviously we don't know exactly how serious the situation is at your particular workplace. Some good news, however – ACE is preparing for an investigative conference on games design this autumn – watch this space.

The Letters Page is due for a change next month, with the start of our Guest Forum section. Each month, we'll be roping in a top industry figure to sit in the hot-seat and answer your questions. We'll be looking for lively debate and searching queries!

ARSE or BUM?

I have finished reading the Actual Man article, and would like to challenge Vince Tyrell on the subject of his A.R.S.E. For two years I had been doing extensive practical research into VR when I accidentally tripped on my Garden Information Televiser, and banged my head. I suffered a severe electric shock, but was largely unhurt.

Suddenly, I realised that Virtual Reality was a waste of time. Why be virtual when you could be realistic? So I thought up Realistic Reality. I have called it Better Undulating Motion.

At the moment I have three simulations. Food Fight, Invasion of the Couch Potatoes and Chuck the Light Bulb. My B.U.M. can create 200 million polygons per second. I did this by using a customized 7400000 chip which I aquired from Honest John's hardware shack.

Unfortunately I could not find a suitable power source so I am currently running the system off the gasses produced by old Pot Noodles. It features Light Sauced shading (using HP sauce to be precise).

Tell Vince Tyrell I challenge him to an A.R.S.E. and B.U.M. fight. I am confident my B.U.M. will win!

M. Wiggins
Hampshire

AWARDING AWARDS

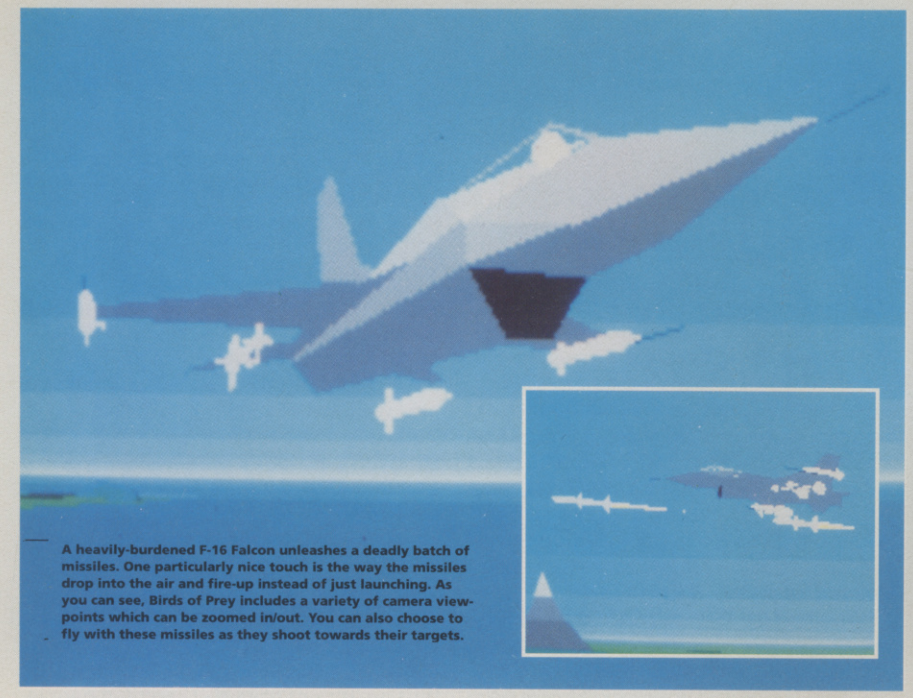
Why are you making such a big thing of your awards for graphics, sound and originality when you don't use them?

If *Wrath of the Demon* was the most technically accomplished game yet written for the Amiga, why was it not given the graphics award? And why did Powermonger and Immortal not receive graphics awards, since they are games which certainly deserve one.

I could go on, but I won't, except to say that the TrailBlazer award won't do games the justice that the ACE Rating did. Get rid of it.

Piero Serra
Northampton

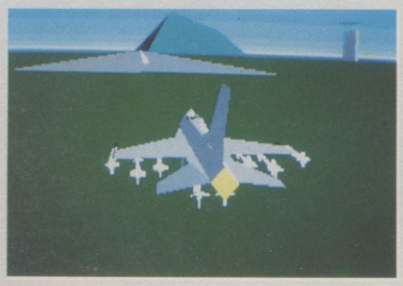
Not use them?! Graphics and Trailblazer awards go to Switchblade II. *Idea and Trailblazer goes to* Killing Cloud. *And* Chuck Rock *and* Toki *both received Graphics awards. We applauded the graphics of* Wrath of the Demon, *but* Shadow of the Beast *had been there earlier and equally well. The Trailblazer is intended to sum up the nature of the games awarded it. They represent breakthroughs in gaming, rather than simply 'being good'.*



A heavily-burdened F-16 Falcon unleashes a deadly batch of missiles. One particularly nice touch is the way the missiles drop into the air and fire-up instead of just launching. As you can see, Birds of Prey includes a variety of camera viewpoints which can be zoomed in/out. You can also choose to fly with these missiles as they shoot towards their targets.

SAN ATTACK

Jez San isn't at all complimentary about other flight-sims on the market. "We can do better than the watered-down products from other people," he says, "The graphics in *Wing Commander* aren't actually that good, they're clunky and don't scale very well. It's just a movie front-end with no substance inside the game. You can go shooting things but you should be able to cope with realism as well. *Birds of Prey* isn't an *F-29 Retaliator* where you just go round and shoot something when you see it."



BIRDS OF PREY

Argonaut Software and ELECTRONIC ARTS have spent over three-and-a-half years on this mega flight-sim. Rik Haynes performs a preflight check-up...

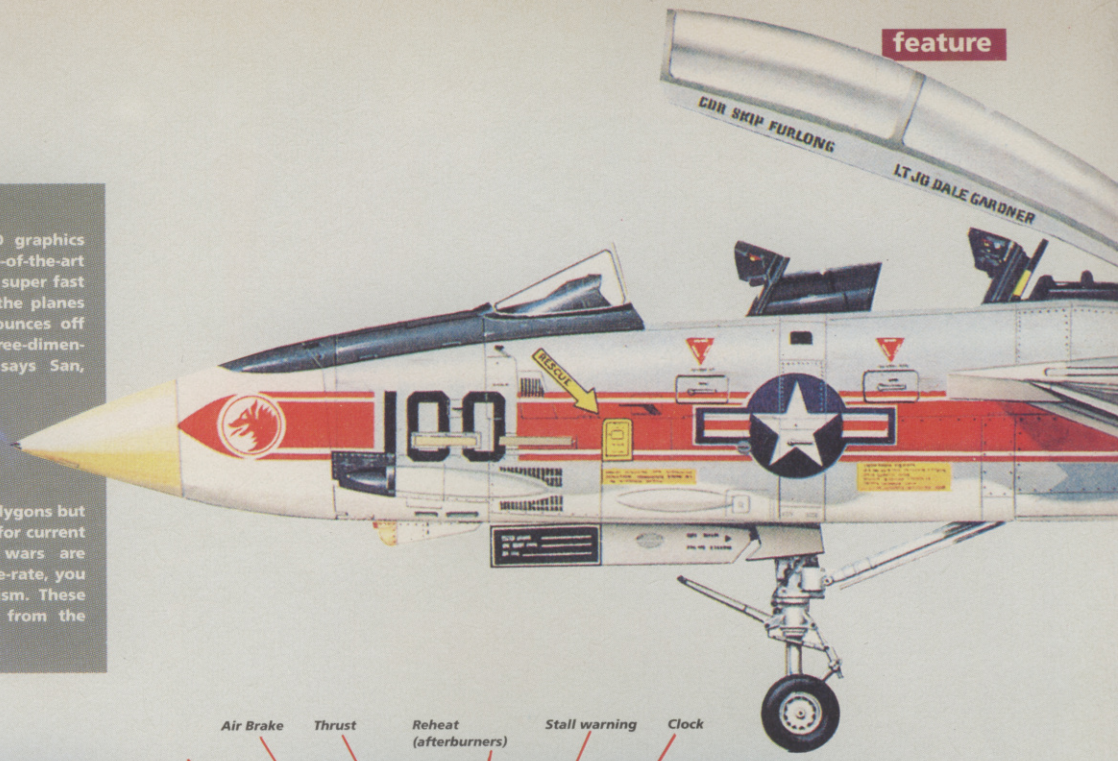
After the ultrafast 3D graphics of *Starglider II*, nobody could doubt the programming skills of Jez San and his games development company Argonaut Software. Hints of total burn-out came with the appalling *Afterburner* and dowdy *Days of Thunder*. Now the boys are ready to strut their stuff with a flight-sim which has taken over three years and £200,000 to develop. So will their latest release put them back on top?

Birds of Prey (formerly *Hawk*) is a very authentic game in terms of flight dynamics. Argonaut has managed to accurately simulate a staggering 40-plus modern-day aircraft, including: F-4 Phantom, F-14 Tomcat, F-15 Eagle, F-16 Falcon, F-18 Hornet, F-117 Stealth Fighter, B-52, B-1, B-2 Stealth Bomber, SR-71, Hercules transport, Tornado, Harrier, Hawk, Mirage F1, MiG 21, MiG

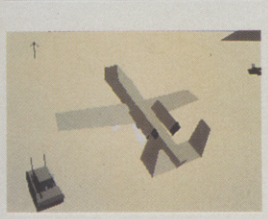
Meet the BIRDS OF PREY creators at Argonaut Software [clockwise from top left]: Jez San (low level I/O, graphics, game-shell), Chris Humphries (flight model, game design, front-end), Giles Goddard (sound FX), Ian Crowther (front-end), [front] Rick Clucas (low level I/O, graphics, game-shell), Pete Warnes (3D graphics, 3D maths) and Danny Emmett (3D shapes).

SEE THE LIGHT

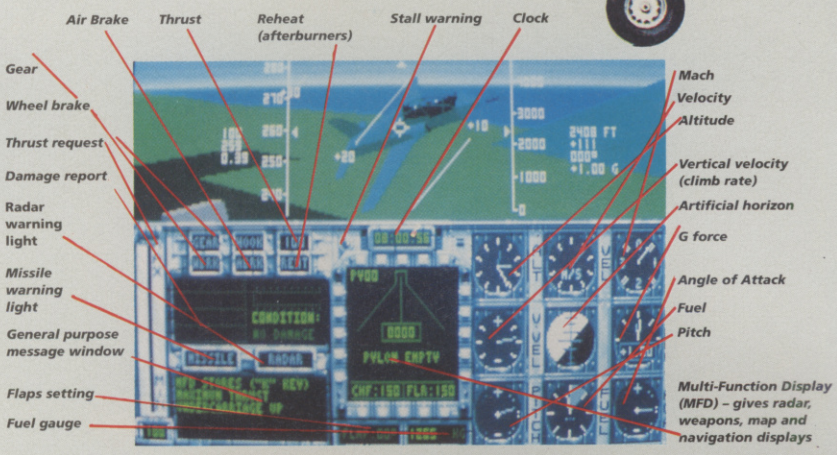
Argonaut Software believes the 3D graphics engine in *Birds of Prey* is really state-of-the-art with many unique features – such as super fast polygons and light-source shading, the planes get brighter and darker as light bounces off their surfaces. "This is the first three-dimensional game to feature curves," says San, "Polygons are very angular and make three-dimensional objects look blocky. We can have curved wings, this makes shapes look more realistic. Our next simulation will feature rendering techniques that are better than simple polygons but proper texture mapping is too much for current games machines. The frame-rate wars are silly. You can't just have a high frame-rate, you must also have gameplay and realism. These both take processing power away from the graphics."



An American F117 Stealth Fighter lifts off the runway during a night-mission. This revolutionary radar-evading plane was used to bomb 95% of the primary targets in Baghdad during the Gulf War.



The 3D-model for this tank-busting A-10 'Warthog' is being upgraded as you read this report. The A-10 proved to be a top tank-killer during the Gulf War – two Warthog pilots set a record on February 25, 1991 by destroying 23 Iraqi tanks in a single day.



23, MiG 25, MiG 27, MiG 29, Su-25, Su-27, X-15, X-29 and Boeing's 747 Jumbo Jet.

"We've tried to combine the best of flight simulation and action – either dog-fighting or ground attack," says Project Leader Chris Humphries, "Birds of Prey has almost any aircraft mission you can think of."

These aren't really missions in the usual sense of the word. You choose the type of mission, from 12 diverse categories, and the computer comes up with a different scenario every time you play the game.

In 'Air interception' you scramble to attack incoming enemy fighters and bombers. With 'Reconnaissance' you get to fly an SR-71 at Mach 3 over enemy bases and photograph them. You even get to go on 'Stealth Missions' – move in without being detected, drop your bombs and fly home. If you really want a challenge, why not strap your test-plane to the bomb-bay of a B-52, fly up to a certain height, drop away and blast-off into space at speeds in excess of Mach 7.

The exact type and location of the targets and aircraft encountered constantly changes to keep you alert and the game fresh. "There are literally millions of different missions," Humphries reveals.

Jez San, boss of Argonaut Software, is keen to stress the non-political nature of the product. Flight realism is the only thing that matters to him. The map is completely fictitious and the game simply assumes a state of war is in effect. The rest largely depends on your actions. This 'living' game-world is brimming over with independent computer-controlled events and enemy.

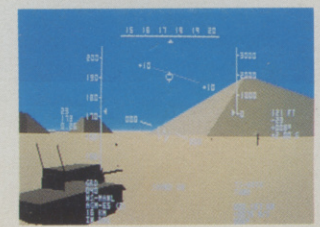
Strategy and tactics play a large part in the game. As an example, if you want to go on bombing missions with a B-52, you have to make sure the SAM missile batteries and enemy airfields have been knocked-out first.

EA and Argonaut are obviously pitching this flight-sim at the more sophisticated desktop pilots out there. So what makes Birds of Prey so special? "It's really nice to have absolutely 100% realistic flight," reckons Humphries. "This is a very realistic combat simulation," reveals San, "it's not some shoot'em-up arcade game with aircraft in it. We could have changed the graphics in *Starglider II* and shipped a game three years ago. *Birds of Prey* is a huge, very complex program. We've had trouble cramming it all into one megabyte. Every single aspect of the game is thoroughly researched and experimented with. Nothing is copied from elsewhere. The attention to detail is extremely high and people will notice this when they play the game. I don't think such an authentic flight algorithm has been combined with a game before, professional flyers have playtested the game including an RAF test-pilot from Brize Norton. *Birds of Prey* is the nicest mix of realistic flight and air combat that you're likely to see."

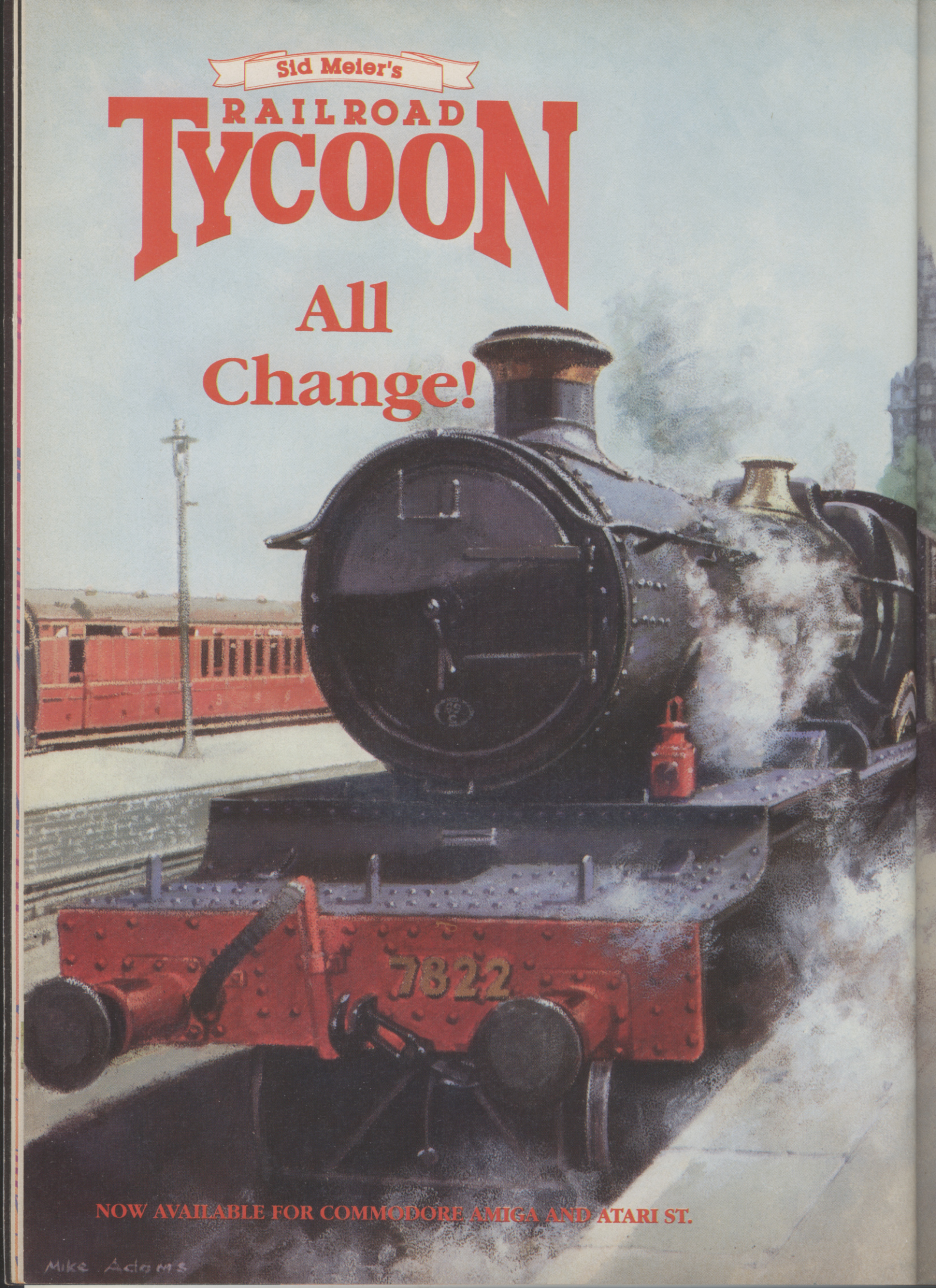
Despite pressure from EA, Argonaut isn't sure about doing a sequel. The North-London games team is currently working on a number of top secret console projects on the Nintendo Gameboy and Super Famicom. There is also talk of a computer-based helicopter simulation which could be here, say, in time for Christmas 1994!

FACT FRENZY

PLAY AREA: Even with the fastest aircraft is will take you at least 45 minutes to fly across the map, and there's nothing to stop you flying off it!
TERRAIN: Green-fields, desert, arctic
GROUND OBJECTS: Hills, fields, trees, coastlines, cities, buildings, skyscrapers, anti-aircraft emplacements, hangars, runways, factories, fuel dumps, ground vehicles
WEAPONS: guns, air-to-air missiles, ground-to-air-missiles, air-to-ground missiles, anti-radar missiles, anti-runway bombs and missiles, conventional bombs, laser-guided bombs, AAA (Anti-Aircraft Artillery)
TIME-WARP: Gets you quickly from A to B
AUDIO: Noise of the jet engines, afterburners, explosions, rockets firing, undercarriage skidding. These have been sampled from sound-effect CDs
SAVE/LOAD: Single missions soon expand into full campaigns, so there's a save/load option to sustain long-term interest
DE-BRIEFING: You get detailed information after each mission such as duration, how your aircraft performed, engagements, etc
KEY CONTROL: There are three 'hot-keys' for fast full-thrust and weapon system selection



Now this is what I call a low-flying ground attack! All the 3D shapes were laboriously designed on graph-paper first, then feed into a custom-designed BASIC program running on an ST. Argonaut hopes to move onto some better graphics packages for its next simulation. "Anybody can design a 3D shape but it is important to have economy of detail," offers Jez San, "You want the fewest number of points on a shape and still make it look correct."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ENTER the CYBERZONE

ACE visits Anglia TV's Norwich Studios where BROADSWORD are filming the pilot for a radically new gameshow... virtually!

Your heart's pounding, sweat beads on your forehead and your reserves of strength are rapidly dwindling. Hold out, you've almost made it. A quick look left and right... there it is - the Prize, its huge multi-faceted bulk slowly rotating in the centre of Cyberzone Plaza. Just a short dash to claim it, and another Red victory's yours. You start to run. Nothing can stop you now.

Then, from the corner of your eye, you see a figure move. The Blue player is here too. But why isn't he running for the Prize? Then you understand. All you can do is watch as the Blue player raises his pistol... With one last spurt of effort you dive for the Prize. Your hand slaps against its cool, frictionless surface. The Prize is yours. You slump, exhausted, to your knees.

Believe it or not, you've been playing a video game...

Cyberzone is the latest project from Broadsword Television Productions, the company behind ground-breaking TV shows as *Knightmare* for Anglia TV and *The Satellite Game for BSB* (now BSkyB), and lays claim to being television's first Virtual Reality programme.

The concept is simple: two teams guide their cyborg alter-egos through a computer-generated virtual reality - the Cyberzone - in a tense race against the clock and each other to try and find 'Survival Points' that will allow them entrance to the centre of Zone and victory.

But it's not easy. The Survival Points are only uncovered by solving puzzles in the game world (fans of *Driller* and *Dark Side* will be at home here). If that were not enough, rogue cars and UFOs zip around the narrow streets and deadly flame throwers and machine guns are always waiting around the next corner... or rather *virtual* corner.

Two teams of two players compete. One player has a full map of the Zone and its denizens, and guides another player who, via a 'mobility station', has direct control over the 'borgs actions. Giant videowalls display the Zone as 'seen' by each team's 'borg in fast polygon-generated 3D.

Things were pretty hectic when I visited the set at Anglia TV's Norwich studios in March. Broadsword had just three days to film two pilots, one for adults and one for children, and I turned up on the third while they were recording the children's show. The highly technical nature of the show meant that delays were inevitable, but one particularly elusive fault was wasting valuable recording time.

Cyberzone's compere Craig Charles, who is probably best known for playing Dave Lister in the SF comedy *Red Dwarf*, wandered the stage, trying (successfully) to keep an audience of around thirty fidgeting children amused while technicians fiddled with cables and tweaked knobs.

It was during this break in filming that Tim Child, designer of *Cyberzone* and one of Broadsword's directors, managed to find time to talk about the show.

I wondered whether the computer-literate children were finding the game easier than the adults. "That's what we expected," replies Tim, "In fact, they're about the same. It takes a while for the players to learn how to use the equipment, but after that they really get into it. If anything, the adult's get far more drawn into it than the kids." Indeed. I saw some some videotape of the previous day's recording and one controller was staring intently at the video-wall, sweat pouring from his brow, and playing as if his life depended in it!

Apart from the obvious technical difficulties, what was your biggest headache? "Well, I'm convinced that nobody wants to watch somebody else play a computer game. The main problem was making a first-person experience accessible to a TV audience, while conveying the mystery and intrigue of VR, which I think we've done."

The biggest objection one could raise is that *Cyberzone* isn't really VR, at least as purveyed by VPL or W Industries, and is little more than a 3D game writ large. Would you agree? "No, I don't. There are degrees of virtual reality, and this is one of them. Again, you have to realise that my main concern is making the game appealing to a TV audience."

Did you consider going the VPL/W Industries route, with headsets, gloves, and so forth? "Yes, but the headset approach is a player-experience approach, and it's an experience that the viewer couldn't share which would be very frustrating. Also, and this is something we've found to be

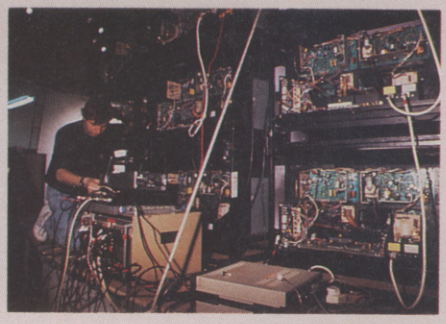
The leader has a full overhead plan view of the Cyberzone arena, with all hazards and targets marked, and guides his or her 'borg-controlling partner via a mike and headphones.

Craig Charles flits between the two teams, interjecting advice and dispensing acid wit, depending on the circumstances.

SUPERSCAPE ON YOUR PC

A Public Domain benchmark utility demo-ing the Superscape system is available for VGA PCs. Send £2.50 (or US $5) to cover media, postage, handling, etc, to: Dimension International, Zephyr One, Calleva Park, Aldermaston, Berkshire RG7 4QW, UK.

The *Cyberzone* set. The two teams play back-to-back in direct competition, and using the guns can even shoot each other, though such morally-reprehensible actions are frowned upon.



Creating virtual worlds is not for those who find wiring a plug a bit tricky, as this maze of wires and cables behind the glossy facia of the set indicates.

very important, you wouldn't be able to see the player's facial reactions.

"Gloves would be nice but because the player is not viewing the game in stereoscopic 3D it's very difficult to judge depth. The gun, on the other hand, will interact with anything along the line-of-sight. The gun basically acts as a tool to activate switch targets and so on.

"We thought about using Waldo suits to control movement but found that people tended to wander all over the set. It's important to keep the players in one place. We'd had experience of using running machines from Knightmare but found them too noisy, and we settled for pressure pads."

What's been the biggest surprise so far? "The pace. Before recording we worried that there might be lulls in play and we'd have to try and pep things up. What we're finding at the moment is that it's actually too fast and far more hectic than we'd ever expected - we're desperately trying to find places to insert breaks!"

Then the fault's been found - a loose cable of all things - and Tim has to leave to continue overseeing the recording.

Anglia TV will view the pilots and then decide whether to go ahead with a full series (probably for showing in late Autumn) and which audience they'll target it at. On the basis of what I saw I don't think Broadsword will have any problem getting the series on the air. As one dazed-looking player said as he staggered off-stage, "It's the best game I've ever played."

● David Upchurch

Ian Andrew, Dimension's boss.

The mobility station in action. Pads on the floor react to players walking or running on the spot and make the 'borg do the same in the virtual world. Likewise kneeling on pads in front of the controller makes the 'borg crouch, while pads behind make the 'borg step back. Buttons to the left and right of the player rotate the 'borg in variable increments. Sensors in the gun holster detect when the gun has been drawn.

MIDI MADE EASY

Cyberzone is unique, not least in the way sound effects are generated. Normally such effects are added in post-production, costly both in terms of money (up to £100,000 per show) and time.

However, in *Cyberzone*, the Superscape program has been set up to send a MIDI stream to an AKAI S950 synthesiser (costing just £1000) should certain 'events', like a 'borg colliding with a wall or a gun being fired, occur. The synth then plays the called-for effect. The MIDI data stream also includes velocity information, so that distant effects actually sound far away.

Dawn Leeder, sound technologist for Broadsword, first had the idea while working on *The Satellite Game* and has named it 'MIDI dubbing'. Only twenty-four events are currently catered for, but there's no reason why more, including ambient sounds, couldn't be added. The main object was to keep it simple and functional. "Occam's Razor," explains Dawn, "has been applied to every aspect of the project."

No shots of the Cyberzone arena were available at the time of going to press, but these Superscape shots are very close to those in-game.

This shot indicates the level of image complexity possible using the Superscape system. The system could be used by architects to actually 'walk' around their buildings before construction.

CREATING THE CYBERZONE

The Cyberzone virtual-reality environment is created from the 'Superscape' 3D system developed by Dimension International, an independent off-shoot company from Incentive, the people responsible for writing the unique and innovative 'Freescape' 3D routines used in such games as Driller, Dark Side, Total Eclipse and Castle Master.

Dimension was created in January 1989 to explore the commercial potential of virtual reality. Superscape, though based on the principles behind Freescape, was totally rewritten to run on 25MHz 486 PCs. These high-end PCs are readily available 'off the shelf', and offer a great deal of processing power for a reasonable price. As Ian Andrew, Dimension's boss, explained, "If you're writing a piece of software for a range of home computers then you're limited by the capabilities of the weakest machine. With this system we're free to do just about anything we want."

Using SPEA graphics cards, Superscape can generate 256-colour 640 x 480 pixel displays and, depending on image complexity, runs at between 5 and 15 screen updates per second. Ian notes, "It's a compromise between speed and realism. Any lower resolution and the image gets too 'blocky', any higher and the update gets too slow."

The system was written in modules, and can be easily added to or stripped down to suit the application in hand. Within Superscape it's possible to do just about anything. Objects can have 'hot spots' with associated conditionals (i.e. a button on a computer, when pressed, will cause a red 'power on' LED and screen text to appear).

Dimension had previously worked with Broadsword on *The Satellite Game* and it was then that Broadsword's Tim Child first had the idea for a Virtual Reality gameshow. Says Ian, "I like to think that Tim was inspired to create Cyberzone when he saw what Superscape could do."

Tim commissioned Dimension to start work on *Cyberzone* fifteen months ago, with one of the main objectives being the creation of a realistic player alter-ego - vital for audience identification. By studying motion, Dimension have modelled everything from walking and running to crouching and turning to firing the gun.

Each humanoid figure is made up of 200 facets. Unfortunately the female 'borgs resemble Russian shotputters at the moment, as they're modelled using the male 'chassis' and adding two cones for breasts! In the planned series, the Electro-Sis will more closely follow the female form.

Cyberzone uses six PCs to run the game. Two generate the first-person perspective views for the Red and Blue 'borg controllers which are shown on the video-wall. One generates the overhead map views used by the two leaders (only one is needed because the view is the same for both teams). Another PC is for the unseen 'Zone Master' who can oversee the game and generate events to spice up play. The fifth PC display is locked to a TV camera, allowing the show's director to switch between twenty 'virtual' cameras in the game world (Tim Child comments, "Our director, Jim McKinney, is the first to cut between 'virtual cameras. That's a world first if nothing else!").

The sixth PC handles the complex job of synchronising events in the five game worlds. The other PCs each send information to the sixth PC reporting on any changes in their game world. This information is stored up and sent out to all PCs every fiftieth of a second.

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MAJOR ACE BATTLES THE LICENCE OVERLORDS

The stakes are high in the licensing business. Finding hundreds of thousands of pounds to use a name is an expensive way to buy some brand awareness for your new beat-em-up. But software companies are still happy to do just that. ACE investigates.

Examine the upper reaches of any games chart and you'll find familiar names in those hard-fought-for top slots. Movies, coin-ops, books, comics and TV shows have all been turned into games. As well as coat-tailing the publicity and appeal of a well-known character, attaching a familiar name to a game can instantly sum up what the game is about. If people all over the world know who *Major ACE* is and the kind of adventures he has, simply putting his name to a game explains that there'll be lots of action, hi-tech gadgets, combat scenes and so on. With any luck, people will also jump at the chance of 'being' The Major. So the appeal of the licence is clear, but how does the deal work?

Usually it's the film or TV company's President of Overseas sales, or an agent specialising in setting up licensing deals, who receives the first call from a software house about a prospective tie-in. Both Warner Brothers and Universal Pictures have their own companies to deal with exactly that.

US Gold is a big player in the coin-op licence arena and, with *Moonwalker* and the forthcoming *Godfather*, is currently moving into movies too. US Gold's Managing Director Geoff Brown claims the process of acquiring licensing rights has now become familiar to most of the big film companies. "We've never had a flat refusal from anyone. They're used to the procedure now and we don't have to explain the whole thing to them ☞

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anymore. We've built up a good relationship with the major players and they're always willing to listen."

Brown reckons that most of the initial negotiations can be taken care of within one month, after which the hard work really begins.

Depending on which rights you secure, a significant character could be licenced for anything from around £75,000 to £150,000.

"They look at us as another money making venture. We're equivalent to them licensing out a T-Shirt of their character"

These figures are extremely flexible, but sometimes it seems that they only move up. Many deals involving motion pictures run on a sliding scale; if the movie grosses a certain amount at the box office, the games company will pay so-much. If it exceeds expectations, they pay even more. This partially shields the games company from having to pay through the nose for a film which bombs. From the film company's point of view, though, cashing in twice on your own success is extremely appealing. In one particular instance, a company is said to have paid $1.2 million for a particular licence, and have it rejected.

On top of this initial outlay, a royalty of will be paid for every copy of the game sold (see ACE 43). The basic rule is that the bigger the character, the bigger the cheque. Sean Brennan, Marketing and Sales Director at Mirrorsoft estimates that the royalties paid out for decent tie-ins can swing from 5 and 15%, depending wholly on the strength of the property.

Once the figures have been thrashed out, the storyline for the game must be produced in accordance with guidelines for the character's behaviour. In MoonWalker, Michael Jackson wasn't allowed to kill anyone (hence the spinning hat).

At Mirrorsoft (responsible for *Back to the Futures 2 & 3*, *Turtles* and forthcoming *Predator 2*) Brennan says that in order to keep their games as close to elements in the films as possible, they work directly from the movie script.

The script is sent out to a couple of development houses deemed suitable for work on the project, with a few ideas for particularly important scenes noted. Once the developers come back with their suggestions, everything goes to the movie company for approval. The movie company may come back with some gripes, but generally this process is a bit of a formality.

Indeed, according to Brown, the licensors have become more relaxed about the use of their characters: "So long as you don't do anything silly, like make Bruce Willis black, they don't really mind."

MAJOR PROGRAMMING

Certain development houses have made a name for themselves for producing licence conversions. The benefits are obvious: they help pay the rent and provide the resources to write their own, original product. But licences are not without headaches - the pressures of a movie licence, in particular, are great. Timing is extremely important, and so completion deadlines are met with bonus payments or missed with penalty clauses.

Gremlin Graphics have had a string of sporting licences recently, from *Team Suzuki* to *Team Toyota*. In the past, they have steered away from movie and coin-op tie-ins. "It's not a policy, by any means." says David Martin, Special Projects co-ordinator for the Sheffield based firm, "It's just that we didn't come across any particularly appealing deals in the past. We're currently working on two movie projects, though."

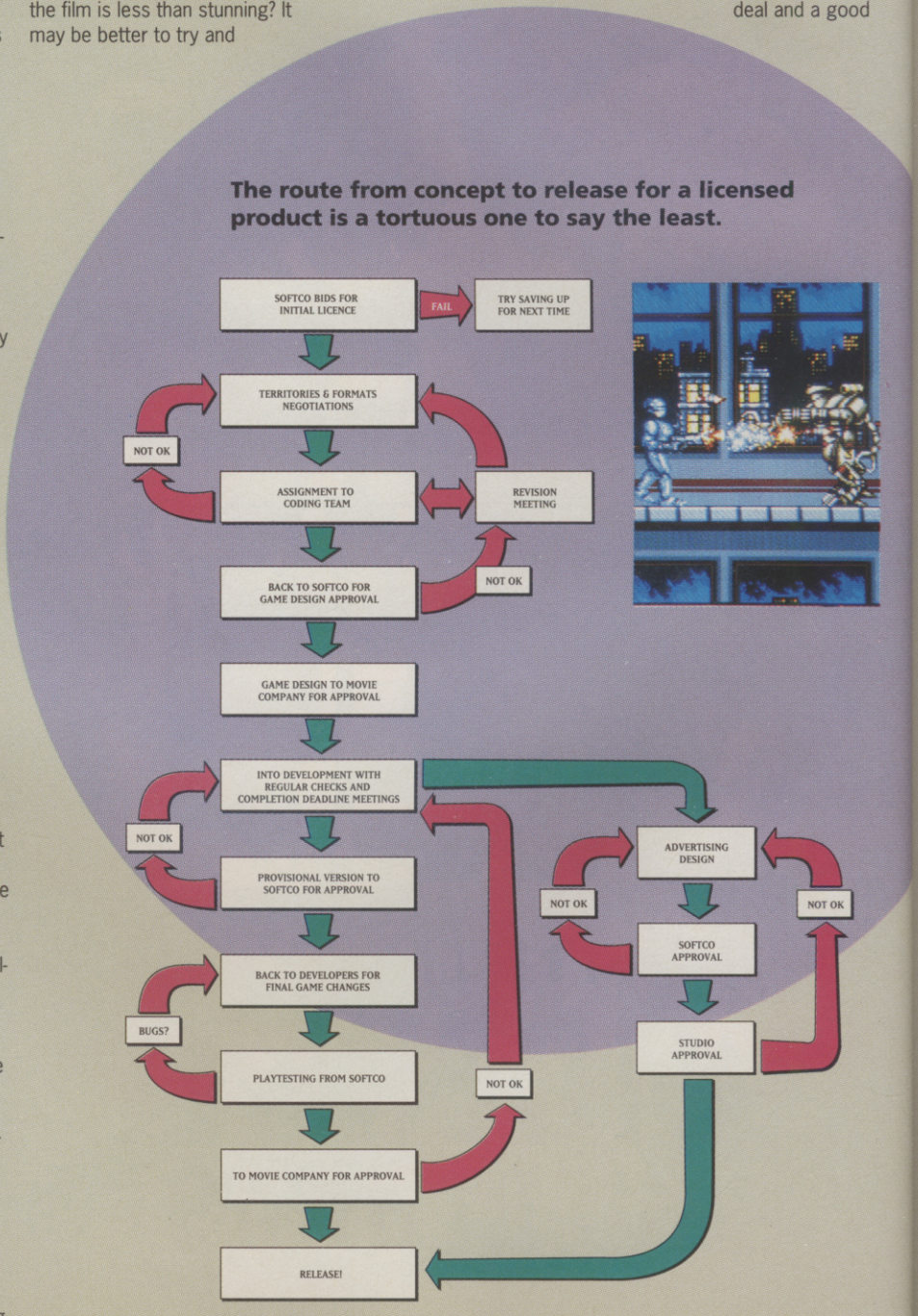
Martin says that these deals are more two-way than many people would think; "If you look at the demographics, the people who are playing *Lotus Esprit* today will be choosing which cars to buy in a couple of years time..."

Opting for a brand name, like *Suzuki*, rather than a finite event, such as a film, has advantages, though. There are still a whole number of areas which, to a greater or lesser extent, are beyond the control of software companies.

What if advance word from the US is that the film is less than stunning? It may be better to try and rush -release the game before the UK film-critics get their knives out. If the movie receives an unexpectedly- high ratings certificate, half of your potential buyers may be prevented from seeing it. If your product has slipped through development, would it be better to hold back for the video release, or the video sell-through? And then there's the reviews of the game itself...

Publishers are completely aware that it's virtually pointless to release a poor-quality tie-in. For a start, news travels fast, and frosty receptions to a conversion of a big character will do nothing to aid any subsequent deals. Martin; "There are two publications, *The Licensing Reporter* in the UK and *The Licensing Book* in the States, and all they write about is licensing deals, what's available, who's got what and so on. Favourable stories about a successful deal and a good

The route from concept to release for a licensed product is a tortuous one to say the least.



product to back it up can really pave the way for future tie-ins."

However, there are times when a softco has to cut its losses. Having invested a large sum of money acquiring and developing a license, it's extremely difficult to justify killing a project, while spending extra time reworking a project will mean the softco has to stand by and watch the hype surrounding their hot property rapidly cooling.

LICENCES AND LIKENESSES

The up-front payment (providing the negotiations are sound) entitles the softcos to use the likenesses of some actors from the movie or TV show in the game's advertising. Some of the big stars throw a spanner in the works by not allowing any representation of themselves to be used other than for the specific promotion of the original movie. But generally, so long as you keep the characters in the game representative of the characters in the film, you can use the actor's likeness (there's no problem with making Robocop look exactly like Robocop, or Batman look exactly like Batman, for example).

Thus in the adverts you can use your picture of Kevin Costner - as Elliot Ness - to advertise *The Untouchables*, since he has already been paid for use of his likeness to advertise the movie. However, print a picture of Costner wearing a baseball hat in a fast car and associate it to the game of the film, implying he's personally endorsing the game, and then you're really in serious trouble.

It's in the game itself, though, where the problems occur. Generally, since most graphics are pretty small, it's possible to put across the feel of a character without any need to actually copy the fizzog of a famous star. But on in-between sections (vital to set the scene in movie-tie ins for that very reason) softcos can run into difficulty. Ever wondered why bug-eyed Arnie in the *Recall* in-betweens looks a bit, er, "wrong"? Or why Marty and Doc in *Back to the Future III* don't look quite the way they should? There's your answer.

POOR RELATIONS?

While coin-op companies regard the home-computer licensing of their games as an essential part of the business, building their name and heightening recognition of their brand (play a good coin-op conversion at home, and you're more likely to play the coin-op company's next arcade release), movie companies regard these deals with less esteem. Brown: "When you consider that *The Godfather Part III* will make $100m around the world, the amount of money we'll make for them is peanuts."

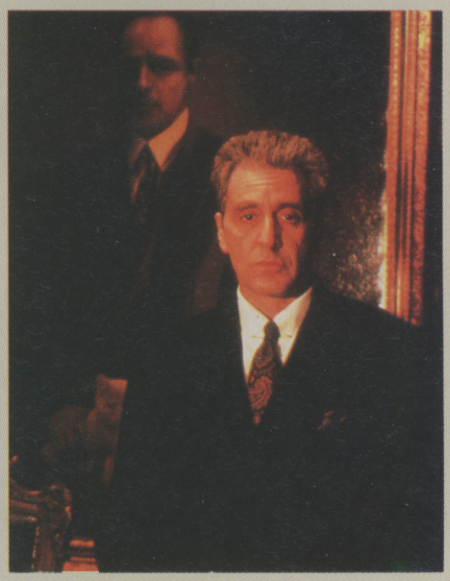
Can't Do That!

Depending on the nature of the character licenced, the owners of the property will impose specific regulations on the software house. The younger the appeal of the character, the more tame his computerized adventure will tend to be. In the Major's Case, the design team would be given a reasonably wide rein, since his reputation is already pretty tough ■

MEET THE MAJOR!

Some tie-ins are better than others. In a predominantly male-youth-orientated market, the *Crystal Tips and Alistair's Jigsaw Game* is unlikely to recoup its initial tie-in outlay. *Major ACE*, however, is the epitome of the ideal licence character. Throughout this article, the facts and figures used indicate the approximate sums softcos would expect to pay for use of a character fitting the Major's description.

Major ACE is a cartoon hero currently appearing in the *Adventures of Major Ace* comic. Previously he appeared in *Suicide Skwadd Weekly*, and it was from there that his appeal grew. His mission, as commander of the Special Space Service, is to rid the Galaxy of wrongdoers. He's a martial arts expert, is fluent in many languages, is famed for his wide range of special weaponry and is the best Hover-tank pilot in existence. His US TV show attracts twenty-million viewers per week, and is soon to be available on satellite TV in the UK. A motion picture of the Major's exploits is in pre-production at the moment. It's rumoured that Schwarzenegger, Van Damme, Stallone and Michael Pare are all up for the part.

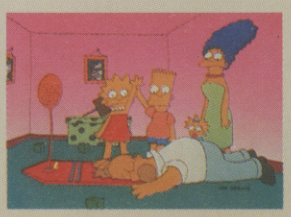


Al Pacino as Michael Corleone ponders US Gold's latest bid for *The Godfather* licenxe. An offer he can't refuse?

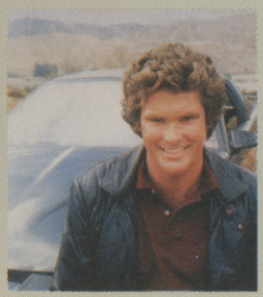
If you're after the *Ghostbusters* licence, who you gonna call?

THE NAME GAME

Hits:
Robocop 1 & 2
Total Recall
Untouchables
Outrun and *Turbo Outrun*
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
Frankie Goes To Hollywood
Ghostbusters



Misses:
Knight Rider
StreekHawk
Miami Vice
Charlie Chaplain
Marilyn Monroe
James Dean



Nightbreed
Dempsey And Makepeace
Ghostbusters 2
Rogue Trooper
Garfield

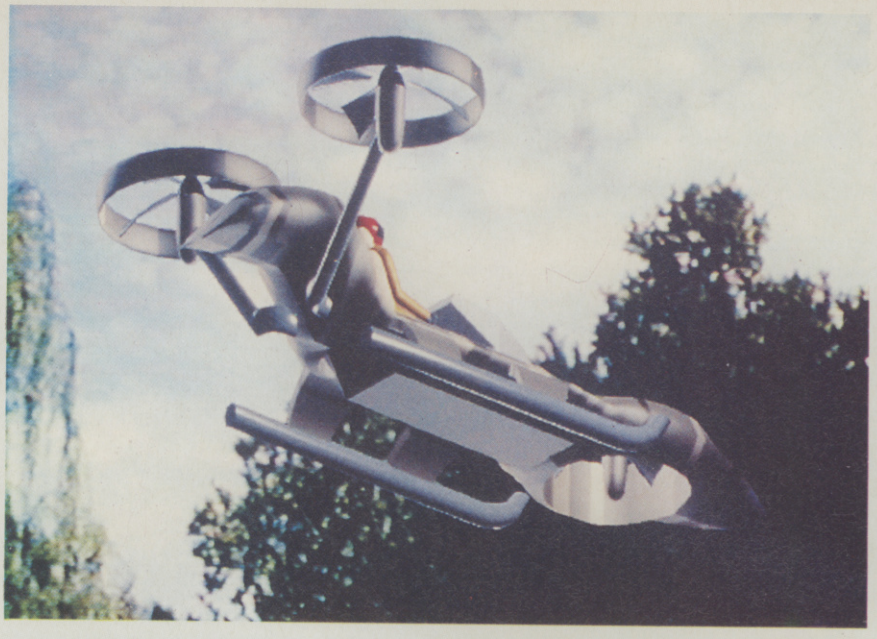
Future Attractions:
The Godfather
Terminator 2
Predator 2
The Simpsons
Aliens 3

Thanks But No Thanks:
Tie-ins offered to Games companies that "didn't quite fit our marketing stategy at that particular time"

The Red Arrows - Nice flight simulation potential but no combat. Perhaps a Tron-styled section where you have to avoid the plooms of smoke left by your fellow pilots?

The Crystal Maze - Lent itself to a 3D maze game with a puzzle at the end of each corridor. Not especially gripping.

Thomas Cook - Travel the world in the guise of the famous travel agent! Perhaps an adventure game: "You are in an airport. Time passes slowly."



As the visual sophistication of computer games increase, at least one American company is employing hi-end graphics software and hardware normally reserved for television and film work.

Origin from Austin in Texas used *Autodesk 3D Studio*, a professional £2000 software tool, to design and animate the spacecraft in *Wing Commander 2* – the forthcoming sequel to its award-winning space simulator. "With *Studio* you can easily and quickly produce 3D images," says Jim Rogers, 'graphics engineer' at Origin.

Computer games have been a culture shock for the man who used to transform architectural technical drawings into computer images. Rogers isn't complaining though. "Designing shapes for computer games is a great job, I've done about 30 spaceships in the past six weeks," he confides.

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Origin is using a professional graphics package to create the spacecraft in *Wing Commander 2*.

Autodesk 3D Studio can quickly create realistic shapes that move with natural motion. Anything from bouncing balls to complex robotic assemblies can be modelled, animated and rendered with flat, Gouraud or Phong shading. A built-in materials editor provides texture, bump, transparency and reflection mapping. These advanced computer graphics techniques can introduce a life-like 'photo-realistic' quality to computer images.

Autodesk 3D Studio runs on a 386/486-based PC equipped with MS-DOS 3.1 (or later), at least 3Mb RAM, hard disk, 80387 or Weitek maths co-processor, VGA or Targa-compatible displays, Microsoft-compatible mouse or SummaSketch-compatible tablet. Optional equipment includes ADI-compatible display and pointing devices. Contact Autodesk at (0483) 303322 for further information.

Origin used this suite of programs to design and animate the starfighters, capital ships and space-stations in *Wing Commander 2*. These are, in fact, all 3D-models that can be manipulated in a seemingly endless variety of ways.

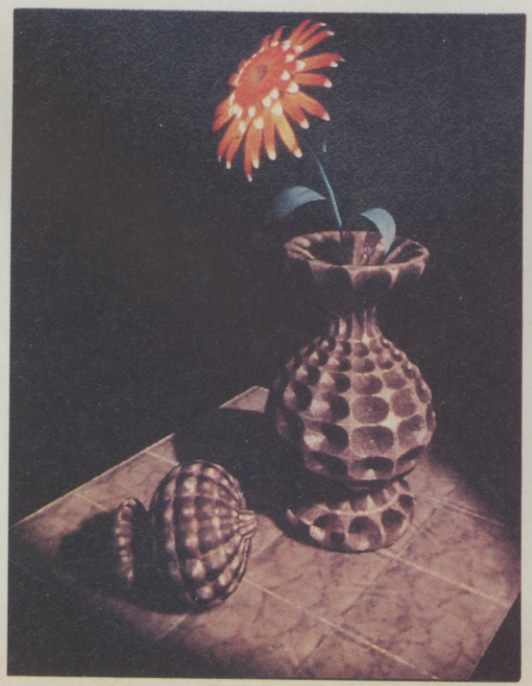
Two artists first provided Rogers with paper sketches (front, top and side views) of each ship. These helped him design the three-dimensional spaceships out of a combination of basic geometric shapes. On average, each spaceship was made up of 25,000 polygons. "There's usually ten different ways you can do something," he reveals.

The spaceships were then handed back to the artists who added little touches like rivets and insignia. Finally, complex animation sequences were designed using the 'Key Framer' in *3D Studio*. These incorporate movie-style effects like cameras and lighting, as players first saw in the original *Wing Commander*. No wonder Origin uses speedy 33MHz 486-PC micros with maths co-processors, 25Mb of RAM and 200-megabyte hard-disks to cope with the great processing strain.

The graphics team really had to stretch their imagination for the new Kilrathi ships found in the game. These have a real organic look, it's as though they've been grown in tanks somewhere. A lot is left to Rogers interpretation of the original paper drawings and tinkering about with the editors to get neat effects. Ultimately, his favourite ship in *Wing Commander 2* is the Terran Broadsword because it's 'really mean-looking'.

The guys at Origin are even playing around with Virtual Reality. Eric Gullichsen from Sense 8 (see the previous issue of ACE) visited Origin last month and put Rogers model of downtown Austin into his VR system. "It was all pretty exciting," says Rogers, "You could leave the landmark building in the centre of the Austin, walk down Congress Avenue, fly around for a while and then come back. This is really the right track for graphics in games. We're trying to push the eye candy as far as we can."

● Rik Haynes



These are just examples of the strange but photorealistic images that can be created with *Autodesk 3D Studio*.

TECHBUSTERS

• If you want to find out about computer graphics try reading Fundamentals of Interactive Computer Graphics by Foley and Van Dam (Addison Wesley), Principles of Interactive Computer Graphics by Newman and Sproull (McGraw Hill) or Microcomputer Displays, Graphics and Animation by Bruce Artwick (Prentice-Hall).

• Would-be digital artists who crave hands-on experience should try DeluxePaint, an art package for the Amiga, ST and PC. Call Electronic Arts on 0753 49442 for more details.

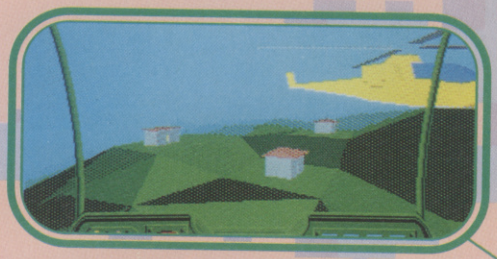
VENGEANCE OF THE KILRATHI

Wing Commander 2 is set six years after the Tiger's Claw victory in the Vega Sector. In the game, you'll pilot six new Terran starfighters in a variety of missions. You might be sent to retrieve refugee lifepods with your tractor beam, defend against the undetectable enemy stealth fighters or fly a jump-capable starfighter against a Kilrathi starbase. "In Wing Commander 2, we'll take the Wing Commander technology beyond the imaginable – with Dynamic Intelligence, digitised art and speech, new and unusual ship and weapons technology, an intensely dramatic storyline and characters, and more of the non-stop action that made the original Wing Commander into a bestselling game," says Origin in its sales-pitch. Wing Commander 2 will be released on the PC in late summer.

FLAMES OF FREEDOM

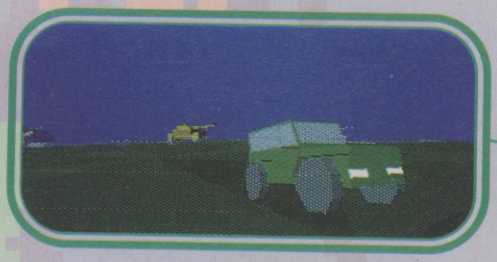
TOTAL FREEDOM

FLAMES O

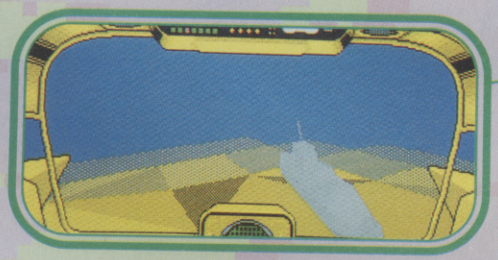


Flames of Freedom, the new blockbuster from the creators of Midwinter, offers you total freedom. Freedom of choice, Freedom of action, Freedom of movement.

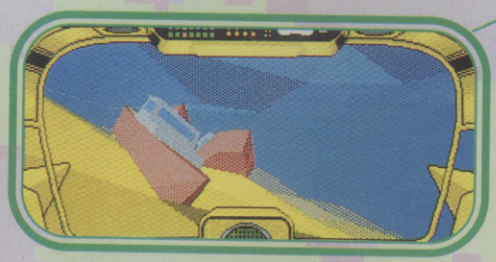
Dogfight with opponents over villages for command of the skies, or attack ground targets which serve the enemy's cause.



Night time sequences afford excellent cover for secret movement and actions, illuminated by the glare of your jeep's headlights.



The playing area of three million cubic miles is not restricted solely to areas above ground. You have full freedom of movement underwater, and three types of 'submarine' in which to achieve it.



Seek out and destroy enemy shipping units, condemning them to a watery grave on the sea bed, from where the ocean's surface is clearly visible above.

Screen shots shown are taken from the Atari ST versions. Actual sceens may vary by format

MIDW

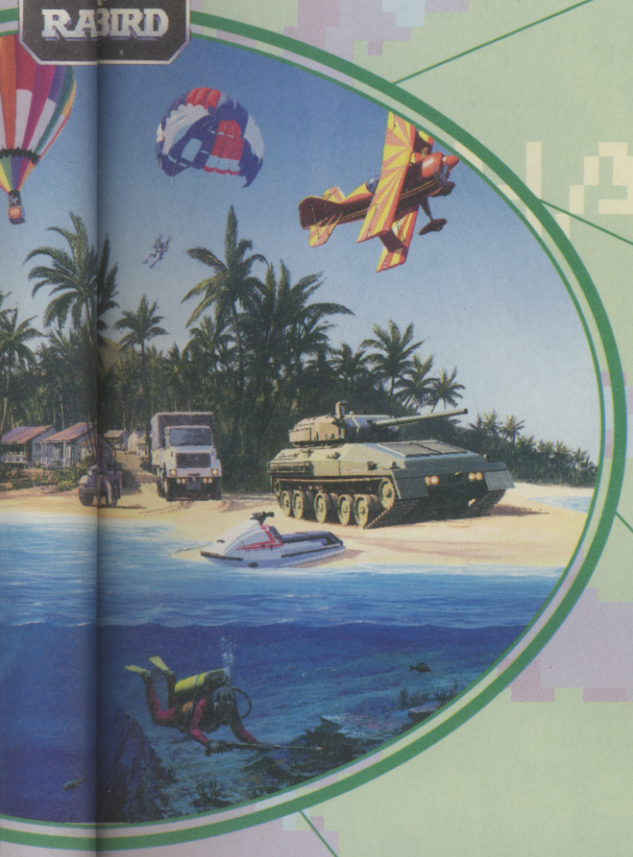
FLAMES FREE

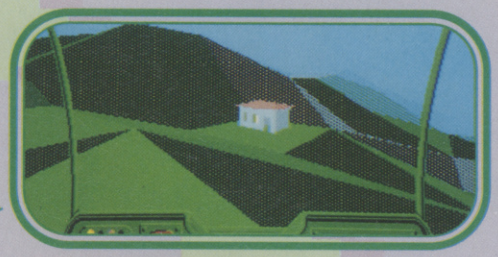
TOTAL FREEDOM- FROM RAIR

(1,000 miles long X 1,000 miles wide X 15,000 feet high.) + (4,000 characters X 22 moderans

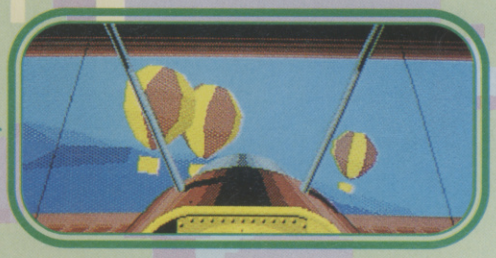
O FREEDOM

A three dimensional environment packed with action, adventure and strategy. Entering it is easy.....breaking free is what's hard !

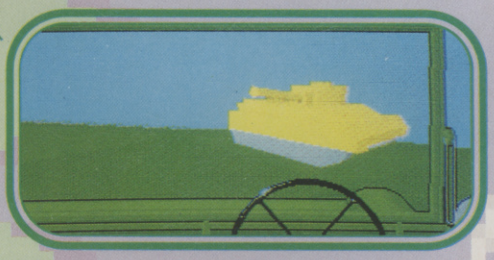




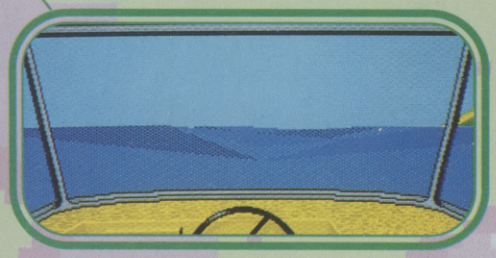
A million square miles of accurately mapped 3-D terrain, generated by fractal techniques, and fully light sourced throughout, provides a playing arena far superior to even its predecessor, Midwinter I.



Fly the skies above the forty-one islands by helicopter, zeppelin, parachute, rocket pack, or, as seen here, biplane and balloon, all offering superb views of the land and of the other aircraft.



The enemy have a vast array for firepower aimed at you, on land, in the air, and across the sea, and react quickly and intelligently to your actions.



The sea surface is generated by constantly moving fractal points, causing you to bob up and down as you swim or sail across it.

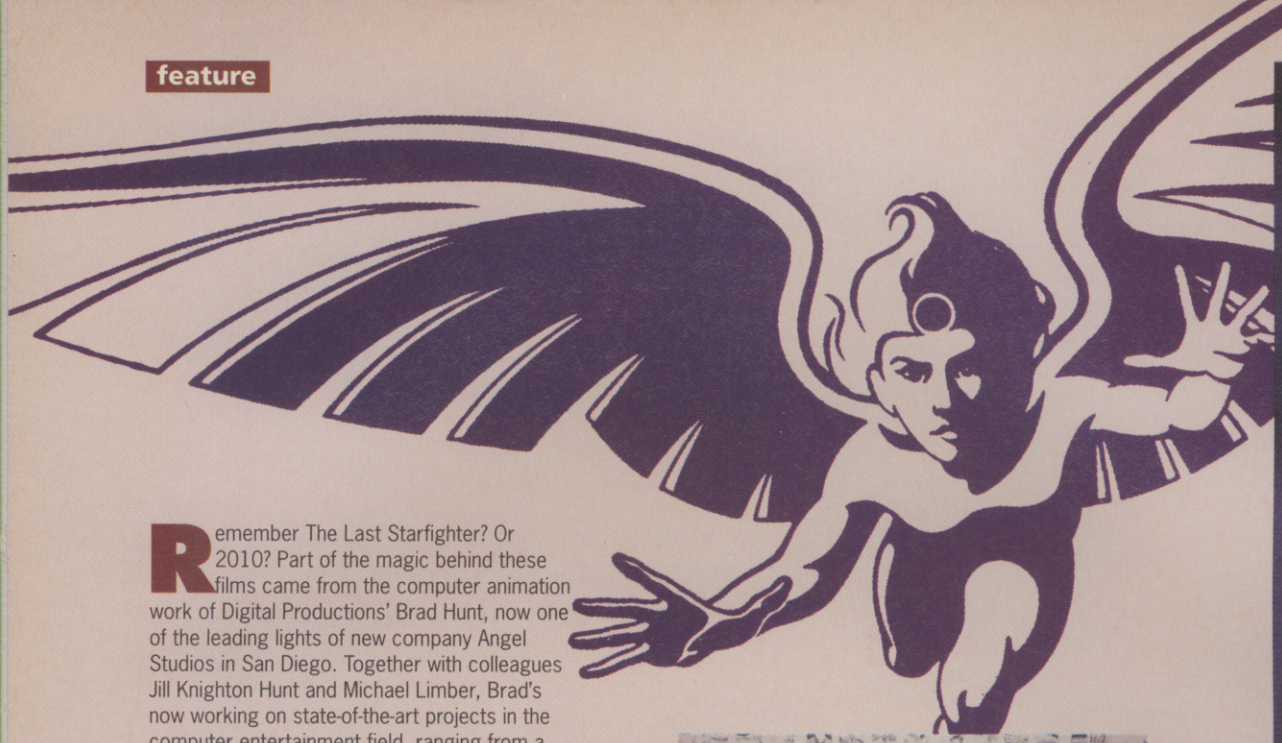
MIDWINTER

AMES OF FREEDOM

Flames of Freedom will be available shortly for your Commodore Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC compatibles.

RAIBIRD MASTERS OF STRATEGY

modes transprt X 1,000s of buildings) = 3,000,000 cubic miles of Action, Adventure and Strategy.



Shooting

Remember The Last Starfighter? Or 2010? Part of the magic behind these films came from the computer animation work of Digital Productions' Brad Hunt, now one of the leading lights of new company Angel Studios in San Diego. Together with colleagues Jill Knighton Hunt and Michael Limber, Brad's now working on state-of-the-art projects in the computer entertainment field, ranging from a new Stephen King movie to virtual reality software control systems and VR arcade machines.

The connection with Stephen King came via a new Hollywood production company called Filmlight. Spearheaded by producer Gimel Everett and director Brett Leonard, Filmlight got the license to produce a new Paramount feature inspired by King's short story The Lawnmower Man. The film will be the first to contain a full computer generated virtual reality sequence and, more importantly, the first in which computer generated graphics will actually be a driving force in the plot.

'Computer animation in movies has actually been getting more and more basic,' points out Brad. 'Instead of using computers to generate complex abstract environments, the trend now is to use them for more straightforward effects - like the underwater alien in The Abyss or the skeleton in Total Recall (when Arnie walks behind the X-Ray device). The Lawnmower Man will be the first film in which key action is actually performed by computer animated figures – a lot of the plot revolves around what happens in the animated sequences.'

The Angel team working on The Lawnmower Man project: (l/r) Michael Limber, Jill Knighton Hunt, and Brad Hunt

(Right) This fantasy insect was created and animated by Jill Knighton Hunt – a perfect example of real life motion translated into an unreal world. Professional animation techniques include mimicking camera apertures, here giving very restricted depth of field to emphasise the insect in the foreground

Despite the excitement at Angel Studios about the King project, this is only one aspect of their current work. In fact, in many ways the other projects the company have on the drawing board are even more exciting for games players. Angel, after excelling in the animation market, are now looking for pastures new: and they've decided to branch out into the computer entertainment field with..wait for it...their own virtual reality arcade systems.

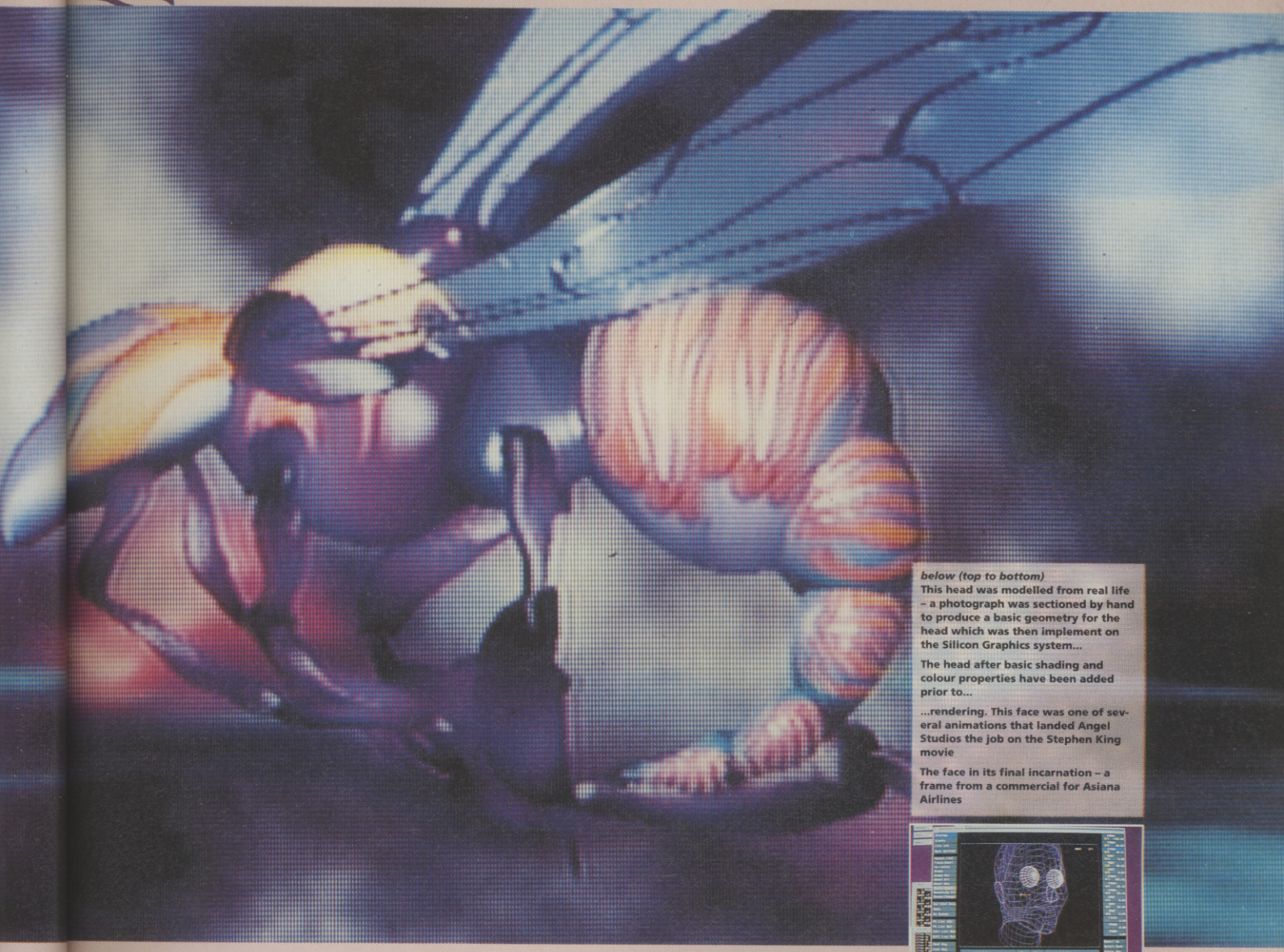
ARCADE ADVENTURE

'We started looking at some of the projects we were working on and realised that we weren't entirely happy with out lot,' recalls Brad. There is, after all, a limit to the number of corporate logos you can spin through space at the end of a thirty second ad spot. 'Computer animation involves long hours and is a service business – we wanted to build something that would be both fun, a long term investment, and a product we could sell.'

An extended round table discussion brought the Angel crew onto to the topic of computer entertainment, and arcade machines in particular. Brad had already designed a four-legged 120lb hydraulic robot but this complex and expensive project hadn't been much fun. In the end, they decided to use their connections with the local university engineering department to pioneer a new hydraulic cabinet system for running VR entertainment.

The first working prototypes of the chair simulator will be finished by June this year. The system has four degrees of freedom (roll, pitch, yaw, and vertical) which can be combined and linked to the images on-screen to produce 'Star Tours' type experiences, but completely interactive and under user control.

Much of the power of this system will come from the software driving it. Angel Studios have a tremendous advantage here because their work in the animation field has already led them to design and work with state-of-the-art tools for modelling, animating, and rendering 3D images. They're currently developing a set of software tools called Scenix, '..a visual programming lan-



below (top to bottom)
This head was modelled from real life – a photograph was sectioned by hand to produce a basic geometry for the head which was then implement on the Silicon Graphics system...

The head after basic shading and colour properties have been added prior to...

...rendering. This face was one of several animations that landed Angel Studios the job on the Stephen King movie

The face in its final incarnation – a frame from a commercial for Asiana Airlines

g a Line

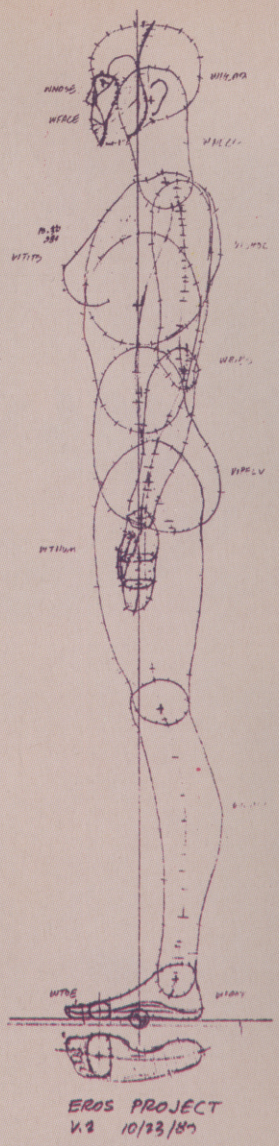
Two points make a line, three lines make a polygon, two hundred polys make a face, and six hundred and thirty thousand polys make a movie...at least they could if you had Angel Studios working for you. ACE visits a company who are getting animated about computer entertainment

guage that we can use for several applications,' explains Brad, 'We can use it for generating the virtual reality databases, supporting the VR authoring system, and generating the displays for the arcade system.' Scenix is certainly powerful enough – it can handle over 1000 moving objects and the company are already used to handling complex displays at animation rates of up to 60 frames a second.

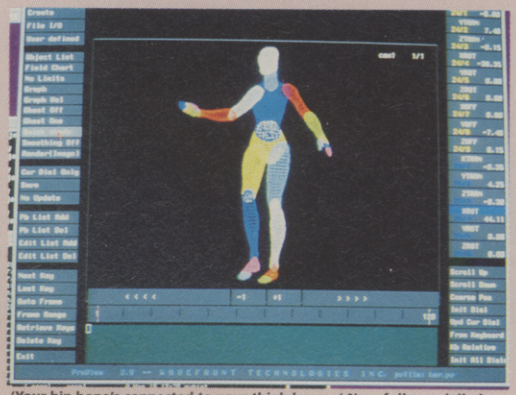
The real challenge facing Angel at the moment, however, is not the software or the hydraulics, but the actual display technology. Current VR headsets do not, contrary to popular belief, offer anything like adequate resolution for a full-scale virtual arcade experience. The company are experimenting with different display methods, involving technologies ranging from fibre optics to polarisation, and are confident that when the system is finished they'll have a display that combines real 3D experience with state-of-the-art resolution.

Later this year, Angel plan to install the first bank of VR machines in a local mall for playtesting. Six or seven units will be linked to large, powerful machine and, unusually, punters will be able to pay for increased processing power on their terminal. This means that if you want complete photo-realism in your game, it's going to cost you more than if you're happy to put up with shaded polys and forget about light-source shading, texture mapping, and other refinements. They also plan to include designer options in the software, enabling players to customise games to their own liking. 'People will be able to create their own worlds using this system,' says Brad, 'they can build their own cities, enemies, horses, cars, whatever – and then experience their own creations in virtual reality. Users will be able to store their creations on the host system to come back to later.'

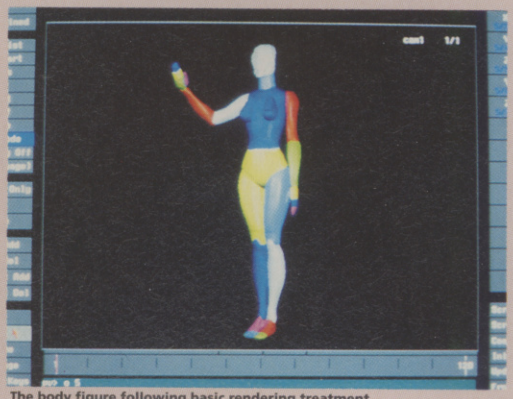
Judging by Angel's proven expertise in generating 3D environments, this system could be something very special. 'Let's face it,' says Michael Limber, 'if you can do reality, you can do anything. We started with photo-realism – most companies have to struggle just to end up there!'



(Left) Body geometry is initially captured in a technical drawing before being entered into a 3D graphic software package...



'Your hip bone's connected to your thigh bone...' Now fully modelled, the body consists of 31 graphic elements, each with its own geometry and movement characteristics. Animators work from film footage and personal choreography to determine the movement of limbs. Subtleties of motion dependency (the shoulder movement when the arm is raised, for example) can make a big difference to the realism of figure animation



The body figure following basic rendering treatment...

Modelling the unreal world...

One company recently came to Angel Studios with a straightforward commission for an animated advertising sequence: take the viewer to another planet, overfly the surface, and climax with a logo. How does a project like this get off the ground and into space?

The work starts with the storyboard. This is sometimes supplied by the client, but Angel often work in conjunction with freelance artists to produce their own. It's also important to specify what exactly the finished product will consist of. Film animation requires 25 frames per second and the image has to be transferred onto celluloid – video animation can effectively run as high as 60fps – a 30fps rate with 2 fields of view interleaving at 60Hz. The latter gives a very clean effect, but some clients may specify film rates for video animation because of the 'film effect' it lends to the sequence.

Once the content has been decided upon, the various objects in the animation need to be modelled. This involves defining the geometry of an object and programming it into a 3D modelling package. Modelling can involve digitisation of actual physical objects, free-hand construction, or even careful architectural quality

DANCE LESSONS

Once an object has been modelled, it needs to get moving. Choreography – the manipulation of an object within a time frame – can range from the simple (a ball bouncing in a vertical plane only) to the enormously complex. Angel's animator Jill Knighton, for example, spends a lot of time actually performing physical actions herself to enable her to choreograph complex movements for animated figures. This is difficult enough, but the problems become even tougher when you're animating objects (fantasy figures, for example) for which there is no readily accessible real-world reference. In these cases, the animator often has to work by trial and error

Once motion characteristics have been assigned to objects, the animator needs to work on other elements of the display, in particular special effects and textures. Special effects include such actions as bending or twisting objects, which require more complex programming than simple scale, rotate, and translate operations that can normally be accomplished using standard animation system software and hardware. Alternatively, some objects may require an associated particle system to be implemented – a wave breaking on a rock, for example. Particle systems (dust, rain, fragmenting objects and so on) can be very difficult to model accurately and require a lot of work.

Textures are also vital to the finished appearance of a photo-realistic image. They can be captured from the real world or created by the animator before being wrapped onto the relevant objects.

At this stage, the animator ends up with a 'scene file' that contains geometry of the objects and their associated choreography; information regarding light sources, camera position, camera aperture, and aspect ratio; and object grouping (where one object consists of several others) including overlapping and dependent motion, as in 'The hip bone's connected to the thigh bone...'.

The scene file is then operated on by the appropriate rendering routine that takes all the information and generates the final 2D image. Angel use three principle rendering routines – Pixar's Renderman, which is rather slow but gives extremely high quality results; Silicon Graphic's GL, which is limited in application but extremely fast, handling over 1 million polys a second; or Wavefront, which falls some way between the two.

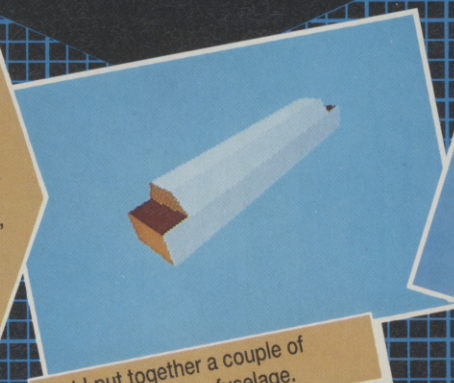
Once you've got it all in the can, all you need to do is write out the bill. This can add up to anything from a few thousand dollars for a spinning logo to several million dollars for an extended film sequence. You then pop this in the post and go to bed for a few days before starting on the next project...

TURN THIS PAGE
TO ENTER YOUR
NEW WORLD.....

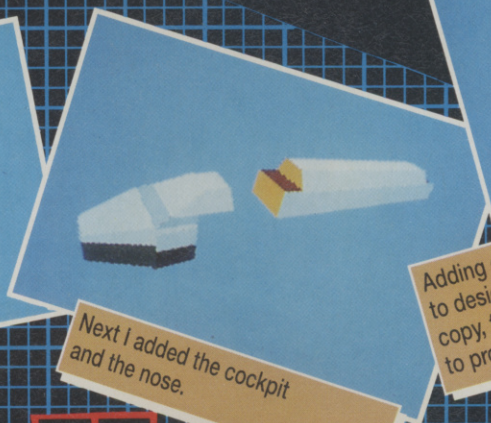
3D CONSTRUCTION KIT

PIERRE TAYLOR (28) – PORTSMOUTH.

I own a car company, but my real love has always been the idea of space travel. I've often played around with art packages but what I really wanted to do was to design a spacecraft once, then bring it to life and walk around it. This incredible package allows someone like me, who knows very little about computers, to do it easily!



First I put together a couple of blocks to make the fuselage.



Next I added the cockpit and the nose.

Adding detail was easy. I only needed to design one wing, then used the copy, flip and rotate feature to produce the other one.

PAUL BUCHANAN (22) – EALING – TRANSPORT ECONOMIST.

I've always wanted to design my own house, but I could never really visualise what it would look like once it was built. What would it look like from above? Or from the side? Or what if I wanted to walk through the front door and arrange the furniture? With this marvellous software package, I can do all the things and make my dream house come true.

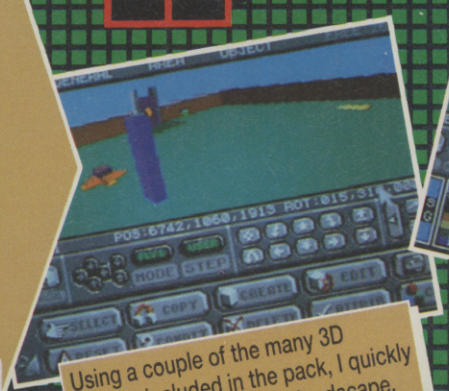
To start with I put up three simple walls.

Then I made a roof and lowered it down.

I added windows, a picket fence and the first tree in my garden. But the interesting bit was yet to come...

CHRIS HALL (15) – STUDENT – YORKSHIRE.

I loved Castle Master and wanted to make a similar game myself. I had plenty of ideas but no way of bringing them to life. After all I'm not a programmer.



Using a couple of the many 3D objects included in the pack, I quickly designed my own game landscape.

I wanted to give the game a particular style. This was easily done by using the excellent colouring and shading facilities.

Then I set up some of the conditions which could make the game truly interactive.

incentive
The Award Winners

Available on
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM PC 3.5" & 5.25", Commodore 64 (cassette, disk) Amstrad (cassette, disk) Spectrum +3, Spectrum 48/148.

Amiga Screenshots Programmed by Incentive Software

© 1991 New Dimension International Ltd.
Artwork, instructions and packaging © 1991 Domark Software Ltd.,
Ferry House, 51-57 Lacy Road, London SW15 1PR. Tel: (081) 780 2224.

Coming soon: The Incentive Story – 4 award winning Incentive 3D games in one pack!

It's a simple, effective way to design a detailed environment (house, garden, village, ship, car etc. etc.) and then look around it to make sure you like the look of it from every angle.

There are environments through environments. For instance, the house has rooms, the rooms have furniture, a chest of drawers has compartments, the compartments have secret boxes, the boxes have ..... etc. etc.

It's up to you. The limit is your imagination. Use it for school – or to show Mum how to re-arrange the living room. Dad might be interested in how the garden would look if it were laid out differently – with a new pool? And how would the neighbours see it from their angle? It's easy! Just spin it round!

This is probably one of the most expensive pieces of software you'll buy this year – but *at last* you can make your computer really show it's potential.

"There's no doubt about it, this could be the most impressive game creation utility ever released.

Not only does it allow you to create run-time modules complete with animation, shoot-em-up compatibility, puzzle solving, and maze exploration – but it enables you to do it in solid 3D, using a system that's even better than Freescape!"

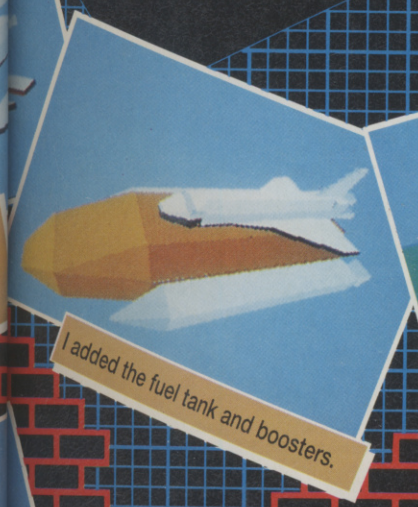
ACE - FEB 91

"3D Construction Kit gives newcomers and non-programmers the power to create solid 3D objects that can be stretched, rotated, suspended, stacked and even given animation effects. Yet the whole system is so user-friendly that it makes most simple art packages look cumbersome."

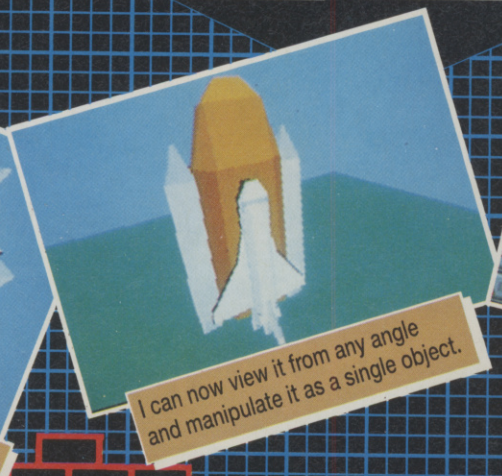
ST FORMAT - FEB 9

"Build your own virtual reality, but don't be misled. This is **not** a boffins only product. I've produced a special video included in the pack which shows you how to do it – and helps get you off to a flying start. After that it's simple and in no time you'll be impressing everyone with 'magical' designs on your computer!"

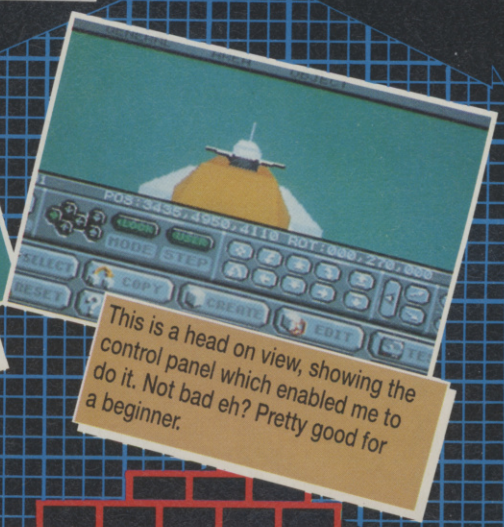
IAN ANDREW, INCENTIVE



I added the fuel tank and boosters.



I can now view it from any angle and manipulate it as a single object.



This is a head on view, showing the control panel which enabled me to do it. Not bad eh? Pretty good for a beginner.

Walking in through the front door, I could see what the rooms would look like.

And using the simple control panel, I could design the furniture and move it around.

Home, sweet home!

Using the simple pull down menus and on screen prompts designing a great game was a doddle – I could even have strength and time bars!

Finally, I dropped in a control panel from several included (although I I could have made up my own).

I've sent the finished game to my cousin in Wales. He hasn't got 3D Construction Kit yet ... I reckon it won't be long before he gets a copy.

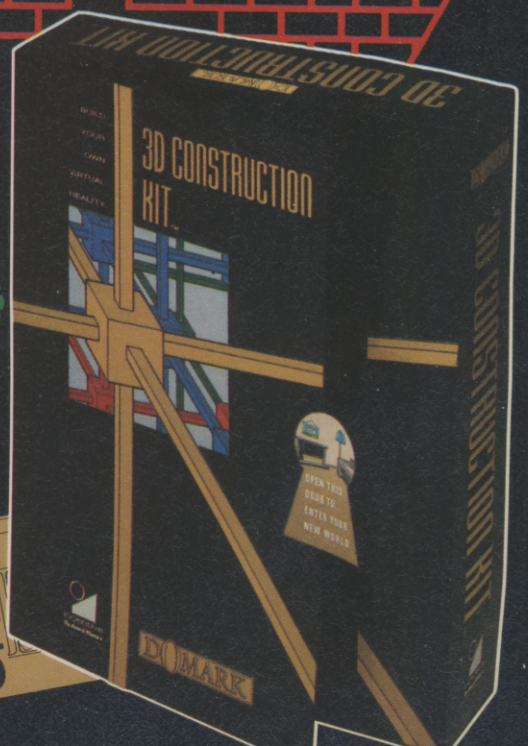


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IMAGE WORKS

BUILDING THE FUTURE

Key US games designers met in San Jose last month to debate the past, present, and future of computer entertainment. ACE was there...

Three years ago, Chris '*Balance of Power*' Crawford decided that if games programmers and designers were ever to climb out of the Valley of the Shoot-Em-Up, they needed to get together.

So they did - all 26 of them in Chris' house in San Jose. Three years later, that gathering of 26 has grown to a massing of over five hundred, making the Game Developers' Conference the largest, most outspoken, constructive gathering of computer game programmers and designers in the world.

This year, the conference took place at the San Jose Hyatt Hotel and featured over 50 sessions, ranging from the esoteric arts of game balancing and programming libraries to the (very popular) debate between Chris Crawford and Chris '*Wing Commander*' Roberts on 'Good Graphics vs. Good Gameplay' (which effectively ended with both contestants arguing the same case, that both were equally important).

Rather than give you a blow-by-blow account, we decided to zero in on a few exceptional individuals who happily ground their personal axes for ACE readers. You can read about them elsewhere in this feature. If you're a game developer, you can also catch a brief message from Chris Crawford on the ACE Interactive Phoneline – and next year, be there.

WORLDS ON THE FLY

Together with virtual reality researcher Scott Fisher, Brenda Laurel has founded a new company called Telepresence, dedicated to developing new software and hardware tools for creating virtual experiences.

'Unlike companies like VPL and Sense8, we're putting the experiences first and then looking for the technology that will enable us to facilitate them. I want the tools to enable me to created dramatically loaded worlds.'

To this end, Brenda works with live actors in improvised situations, developing a model of interaction between players that can be ported into an interactive narrative software environment. She's discovered that in any dramatic situation you can establish certain 'nodes' or crisis points as events develop. These nodes can be modelled in software and used to create decision points for the player. By studying the way in which events evolve on the stage, Brenda has also begun work on software development that could lead to artificially intelligent 'in-betweening' of narrative situations, just as cartoon software draws the 'in-betweens' to link static drawings into animated sequences.

This work could lead to entirely different forms of adventure and fantasy games. At the moment, most fantasy games are simply an endless succession of IF you do this THEN this will happen. The consequence is drawn from a strictly limited database of text and graphic messages. The systems that could come about as a result of the Telepresence research would no longer necessarily require a collection of fixed responses, but simply a collection of rules that would enable them to generate the responses and plot developments themselves.

At her session, Brenda showed a video tape taken from a Japanese nightclub – a driving, intense series of images and rhythms designed to pound the brain into submission and let the body take over. 'It's testimony to the power of metabolic mindf**k,' she told a rivetted audience, 'and THAT's what I'd like to see more of in computer games. I'm convinced video gamers experience altered states – if you tested players I'm sure you'd discover evidence of metabolic change.'

I don't think there'd be any doubt about the degree of metabolic change you might experience in a Telepresence virtual world, where the moment you go for your laser the software begins to roller-coast the narrative and the action into the unknown. There won't be time to think then, buddy boy, just time to experience the wild and unforeseen...

Brenda Laurel of Telepresence – 'Trekkies can tell you what's going to happen in the future!'

ETHICAL INTERESTS

Brenda Laurel is that rare animal who manages to combine long experience in the industry as a game designer and consultant with being female. As a result of her career, which has spanned work for companies as diverse as Atari, Lucasfilm and AIM, she has, however, decided that a good deal of her personality is adolescent male.

As a result, she has an unusually balanced view of the games we play, combining a sensibility about the sometimes dubious ethics of computer violence with a healthy appreciation of that sudden urge to start nuking the humanoids in *Defender*. All the same, she thinks we need to step back and think again about the sort of games we're producing and playing today.

Brenda's been pondering the ethics of gaming ever since, inspired by Captain Kirk's heroic *Star Trek* philosophy had her searching for the NEGOTIATE button in *Star Raiders*. 'Publishers will give you several reasons why there's not much ethical complexity in computer games' wrote Brenda in an introduction for her session, 'One is that it's 'beyond the capabilities of our machines.' But I remember negotiating with Klingons though a teletype in a *Star Trek* program written by Joe Miller in 1975.'

'Ethical topics are extremely important to young people,' she explains. 'We've been sold a very dubious bill of goods by the people who were running entertainment media in the '50's about what young people are really interested in. Look at the kids demonstrating in the streets of Barcelona or San Francisco. Remember the kids in Tienanmen Square....Participating in the world emotionally, ethically and politically is not too taxing for the young – on the contrary, it's the main event of growing up.'

CHEAPER CD

Rob Fulop was the man responsible several years ago for squeezing *Missile Command* and other notorious games into 4K cartridges. He now has a company called Interactive Productions in San Francisco that's pioneering the development and programming of CD entertainment.

Rob's main message to the assembled crowd was that, despite the oft-voiced concerns about the eventual costs of CD games, the cost of producing them was actually falling, not rising.

As an example, Rob cited his own company's investment in desk top video and desk top audio, which have given them the ability to source sound and vision to a professional standard far more cheaply than would have been possible even eighteen months ago.

Rob has also done work on interactive video tape productions for the Isix system (see ACE

issue 26) – a powerful IVT unit that used multiple tracks and branching to provide genuinely 'interactive movies'. We were shown a tape of an early IVT product in testing with kids and grown-ups and the action looked pretty incredible. To date, it's the world's only film shot explicitly for an interactive format and although IVT has not yet made it to market, Rob reckons that something very like it – using either tape or, more likely, CD with full motion video – will be on sale in the near future.

Rob's amusingly unimpressed by new technology and reckons that things haven't really changed since the days of the 4K cartridge. 'We're still dealing with constraints,' he explains, '*Missile Command* had to fit into 4K and it was a real challenge. My latest game runs to 600Mbytes, but the constraints are still the same – I'm out of RAM and I'm out of disk space!'

He does, however, believe strongly in the future of CD-I, acknowledging that while the format does have technological drawbacks, it is the only current contender that, with the support of 12 Japanese companies, has the chance of offering the world a standard for CD entertainment. Stand by for more news of Interactive's titles in the near future...

Two idle attendees pose for the ACE cameraman in the courtyard. On the left, Interplay boss Brian Fargo; on the right, Mirrorsoft's Hollywood impresario Dick Lehrberg, responsible for the biggest license deal of recent years, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Thingummies*

CANDY, COMICS AND CARTOONS

High point of the conference – and fittingly, since he started it all – was Chris Crawford's discussion of the future of games – or, chillingly, the possibility that they might not have a future at all.

Chris' argument rested on the nature of the games that we're fed – he likened them to candy, comics, and cartoons as being short, intense, enjoyable experiences that, precisely because of these virtues, were doomed to occupy forever a small portion of the entertainment universe. Just as we love candy in small doses, comics in small doses, and cartoons in small doses, so too we like games in small doses – or we will, unless the games industry starts to come out with some more diverse products.

Chris' big worry was that was not sufficient diversity of gaming material available to develop a varied taste amongst players. Since we were fed a diet of shoot-em-ups and RPG's, we were unable to mature into a more all-encompassing attitude to games and the most likely outcome was that we would simply, at a later stage in our

Rob Fulop of Interactive Productions, who's early games for Atari (including *Night Driver* and *Missile Command*) sold over 2.5 million copies. 'At the end of the day, the most important part of any CD production is the bit which encourages the players to interact amongst themselves.'

VIRTUALLY ON SALE

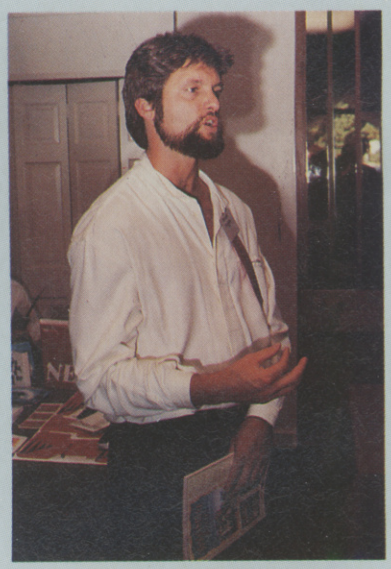
The Virtual Reality boys were at it again at the conference, this time determined to prove that (a) they were doing more than simply generating endless media interest and (b) actually had something to sell.

Mark Bolas of Fake Space Labs described work done at NASA on VR, which had concentrated not on generating computer environments but creating hardware for that people could use to explore real, remote worlds. One such device was the 'Boom Molly', which consisted of a headset on a pan-dimensional moving frame that was linked electronically to a similarly-mounted stereo camera.

Mark made one point about this, which was that it kept body interference to a minimum: 'If you can't eat a doughnut or answer the telephone easily while using the equipment, it's a serious problem,' he said, showing a film of the set-up in action that generated a few laughs as a woman passed the camera and it immediately (responding the remote user's commands) zeroed in on her legs.

Next on stage was Eric Gullichsen of Sense8 (see the last issue), who once again demonstrated the power of his DVI/WorldToolKit combination that offers real-time textured landscapes using a fast PC and costs $18750 – making it the cheapest VR system around. Get your cheque books out.

Finally, Scott Fisher of Telepresence treated us to a hilarious history of early VR techniques. The prize has to go to the helmet designed to warn people of threats from behind and above (with possible military applications). This helmet featured a series of large spines that made the wearer look like a futuristic sea urchin. When a threat was perceived, the rods jabbed the hapless user in the scalp to attract attention!



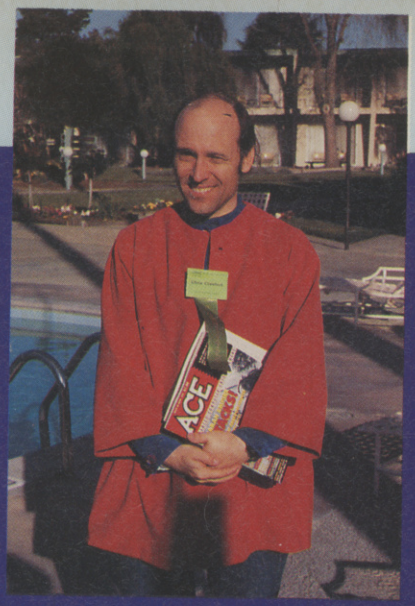
Ken Pimentel of Intel attended the conference to show off the texture power of the Intel/Sense8 DVI virtual reality system...

Using a GeoBall to control a screen display of a virtual world. The ball responds to pressure upwards and downwards, left and right, forward and backward, clockwise and anti-clockwise, giving 8D control – essential for manoeuvres in 3D space

lives, stop playing games on a regular basis. If the industry continues to lose players as they grow older, it can never grow as the other entertainment markets have. 'This really frightens me,' he confessed, 'There's the real possibility that we as an industry face oblivion...'

Later, Chris told **ACE** that one of the major problems with new, more serious categories of gameplay was that of '...getting the audience used to them, because they're accustomed to instant gratification.' As an example, he took Brian Moriarty's *Loom* from Lucasfilm:

'*Loom* was an excellent example of the 'good citizen game',' explained Chris. 'The aficionados hated it because it was too easy. But the game was important – most other games are simply leeches, because we have a fixed audience of players and every standard sequel or shoot-em-up that comes along sucks out a few players. Those games can only shrink our market. But a game like *Loom* can only bring players into the market – we're all richer because Brian did *Loom*, and there are other games in that category, like *Sim Earth* – I really hope that's the success it deserves to be.'



Chris Crawford, founding father (or should that be imp) of the Computer Game Developers Conference and one of the few people to combine brains with passion on the subject of computer gaming 'I've written a book, founded a journal, founded a conference, and run a round table on the networks. I've tried to form a community...'

Chris is currently working on his latest game (the last of a string of thirteen that includes *Balance of Power*, *Balance of the Planet*, and *Guns and Butter*). It's called *Patton Kicks Butt*, no kidding. Watch this space...

The pool is deserted for once as 550 delegates prepare for another day's intense conference schedule. At night, the indulgent relaxed outside in swirling, illuminated jacuzzis.

THE WARRIORS OF TOMORROW...

'The warriors of tomorrow will be those who have developed the art of knowledge retrieval and information management...'

So says Greg Riker, one time head of Electronic Art's progressive multi-media department and now CD and multi-media guru at Microsoft.

Greg's speech at the conference was, he explained, something of an apology for multi-media and CD-ROM. After all, this was the revolution that we'd been waiting for for years, but was still dragging its feet in a welter of disagreement and delay involving standards, technology, and application.

Greg's been instrumental in launching Microsoft's new multi-media development drive, under the heading Information At Your Fingertips. The phrase is intended to sum up in an accessible fashion the rather more subtle philosophy that, in the future, the man who can jack into cyberspace and come up with the appropriate jewel of know-how for a particular situation will be the man (or the woman) who rules the world...

That's because Greg's gone beyond virtual reality. He sees multi-media as the opportunity for people to develop virtual skills with real, dynamic influence over their daily life. Nowadays, as any RPG enthusiast will tell you, the acquisition of skills involves prolonged gathering of experience points, not to mention a few years at college and, afterwards, the regular greasing of the palms of privileged professionals who can help you with specialised information.

All this will change. 'Multimedia gives you a one to one relationship with a 'teacher' and communicates knowledge using a very high bandwidth, using all the senses. There's a tremendous opportunity for information games, and they'll be creating a survival skill for the future – the skill of information navigation.'

Greg sees a future in which people will no longer be tied to desks, neither their own nor those of professionals dispensing information. Instead, portable data machines (like Sony's Data Diskman, but more powerful) will enable people to take complete control over the situations they encounter. Nowadays, your choice of computer games says something about the sort of person you already are, but the portable multi-media machine will change all that, 'Your life will actually be interrelated with the disks you buy. Play a disk and it will become a skill, a means for achieving and developing the skill for something you want to do...'

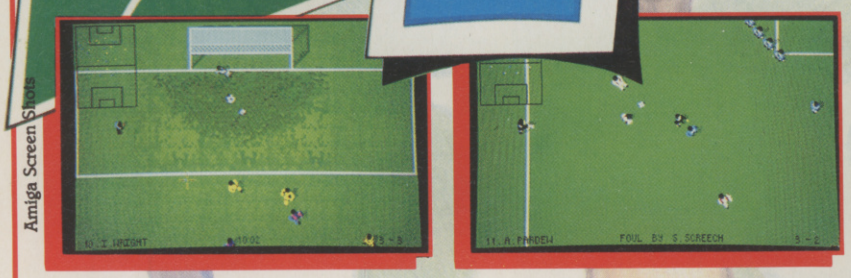
Greg isn't worried by the confusion in the CD market, or by the struggle between the different standards of CD-I, DVI, CDTV and so on...'It's more important,' he says, 'to establish the genre of personal information products. There's enough there to work with.'

Greg Riker, spearheading a revolution to establish the warriors of tomorrow, using high bandwith information transference technology as a weapon against orthodoxy

Richard Garriott, otherwise known as Lord British, pauses for the ACE Flying Eye while perusing the CV of a local hit man. For Lord British, with Ultima getting precious few awards these days and Chris Roberts (in the background) nabbing all the glory with Wing Commander, a hired assassin could be the only solution – but finding one with the right attributes is a big problem

The legendary Sid 'Railroad Tycoon' Meier of Microprose gazes thoughtfully at a VR demonstration. Maybe we're only a couple of years away from the first Microprose VR simulator

KICK OFF 2



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KICK OFF 2 greatly enhances the gameplay of KICK OFF, winner of the THE GAME OF THE YEAR in the U.K., and similar awards right across Europe. A host of new features have been added to the ones that enthralled players the world over.

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* **1 to 4 players option. (Amiga and ST only)**
* **2 players TEAM option against the computer or 2 other players. Hundreds of players each with a unique combination of attributes (stamina, pace, etc.) and skills (passing, shooting, tackling, etc.)**
* **Instinctive Kick Off joystick controls to dribble, pass, shoot, head or chip the ball and do sliding tackles.**
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* **9 types of corner kicks with full control of shot power. Long and short throw ins.**
* **Team selection from a squad of 16 with substitution and a choice of tactics.**
* **League and cup competitions with Extra Time, Injury Time and sudden death penalty shoot outs.**
* **Facility to view, edit and save the Action Replays and create a Golden Shots disc.(Excl. IBM & CBM 64)**
* **Facility to load Player Manager teams and tactics for a single or league game.**
* **Red and yellow cards, 16 different referees, injury time and a host of features to create an atmosphere for a game which is real fun to play.**

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AMIGA USER INT - The best computer game ever **97%**
THE ONE - Ultimate soccer simulation. **96%**
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AMIGA FORMAT - Best footy game to have appeared on any machine. **94%**
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COMMODORE USER - No other footie game can touch it. **90%**
AMIGA ACTION - Surpasses all other football games. **93%**
POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY - Nothing short of brilliant.
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The Player Manager brings the every day realities of a manager's life, his talents as a manager and a player, his triumphs and his failures into a sharp FOCUS.

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NEW COMPUTER EXPRESS - The sheer depth is incredible. A definitive management game.
COMMODORE USER - At last a management game that requires true management skills - a winner. **94%**
ST FORMAT - Brilliant. **93%**
AMIGA FORMAT - Enthralling and addictive. **93%**
ZZAP - Best football management game ever written. **92%**

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SMULATIONS

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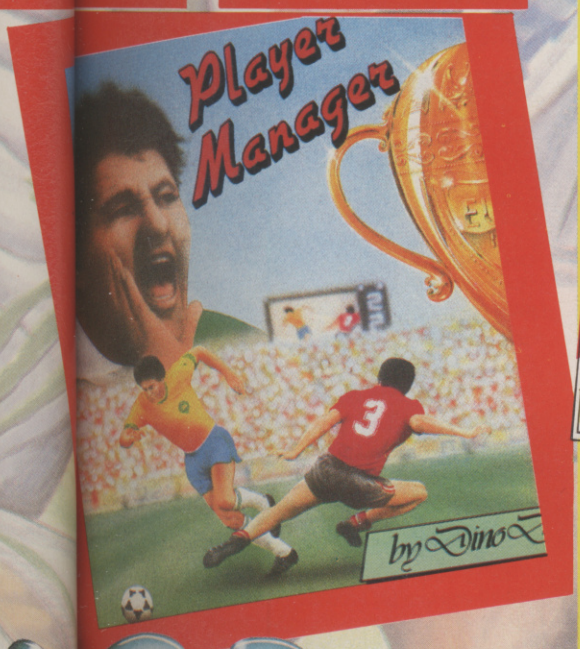

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Enhanced throw ins and penalty shots.
Provision to flick the ball in the air and do a blinding header or a spectacular overhead kick.
New two players team mode. Player 1 in position or nearest to the ball and player 2 in position or keeper.
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4 new pitches - Wembley - Icy - Muddy - Non-League

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NEW VIDEO GAME

It takes a lot of graphics packages, processes and programming to create the visuals in this CD-game. The artists use software like *Sculpt Animate 4D* and *Deluxe Paint III* on Amiga 3000's with massive memories and hefty hard-disks. Jim Bowers told me he is influenced by Japanese comic artists and sci-fi movies like *Blade Runner* and *Alien*. Before joining Psygnosis, he used to design kitchens.

Will the first CD-project from Psygnosis lead to a new generation of video games? Rik Haynes looks into possibilities...

The images show here are delivered in full-screen, full-motion video (with a resolution of 320x200 and 32-colours) at 20 frames per second.

You've probably noticed the impressive intro sequences which have appeared in recent games from Psygnosis. The striking graphics demos seen before *Beast 2*, *Killing Game Show* and *Awesome* were simply spin-offs from the work Psygnosis is doing on CD-ROM. Soon, you'll be playing games which look like films. For want of a better phrase, Psygnosis is developing a new style of 'interactive movie'.

"Everybody is tired of waiting for a world-wide standard for CD," says Ian Hetherington, the joint-boss of Psygnosis. "There are quite a few consumer electronics manufacturers who are either teaming-up with console manufactures and/or going it alone. Our software is platform independent, it's adaptable to any computer and/or console CD-ROM format."

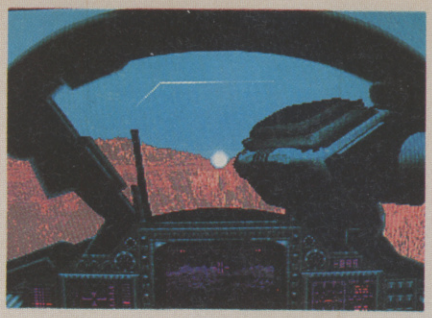
The award-winning games company will support any viable CD-ROM system on the market. No video compression hardware is required. More importantly, these CD-games will look the same or better than these prototype screenshots. Psygnosis is currently supporting the Fujitsu FM Towns, CDTV and PC Engine CD-ROM formats. By the end of the year, the forthcoming Sony/Nintendo Super Famicom and Sega Megadrive CD-ROM consoles should be added to this list. Hetherington adds: "If somebody comes out with a dedicated CD-ROM PC where the internals of the machine are re-engineered then we'll consider it."

ON THE EDGE

"There have been several times when we thought this project was down the drain," confides Hetherington. He believes the calibre of his people is what really makes it happen. Graphic artists Jim Bowers and Neal Thompson work very closely with veteran games programmers John Gibson *(Stonkers)* and Graham 'Kenny' Everett *(Awesome)*. Project leader David Worrell previously wrote *Carthage*. Psygnosis will also appoint a dedicated programmer for each hardware platform.

This is 'dirty' project using illegal software calls and custom-made hardware widgets. One week everybody is depressed because things aren't working, the next is full of jubilation as another stage is successfully completed.

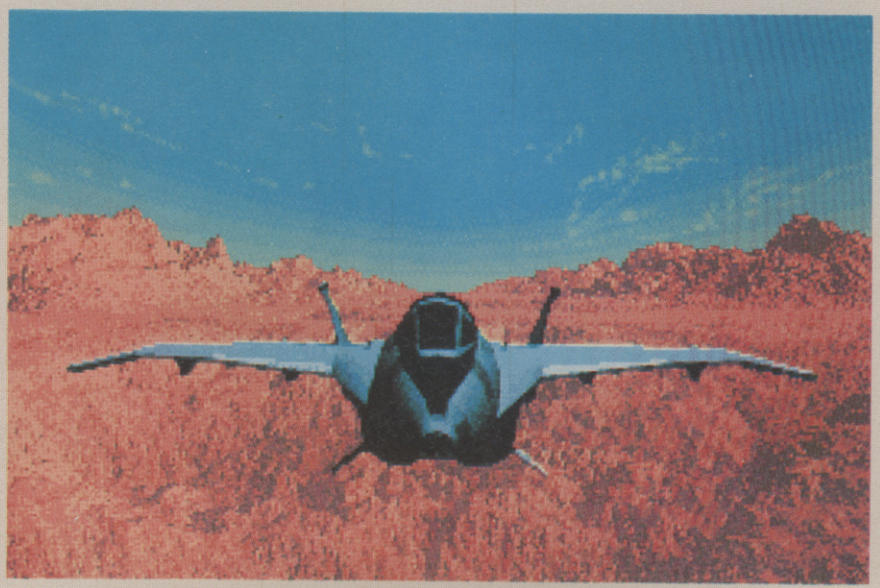
When I visited their busy office, Hetherington and his crew were playing around with interaction – with mixed results. "This is not a business for

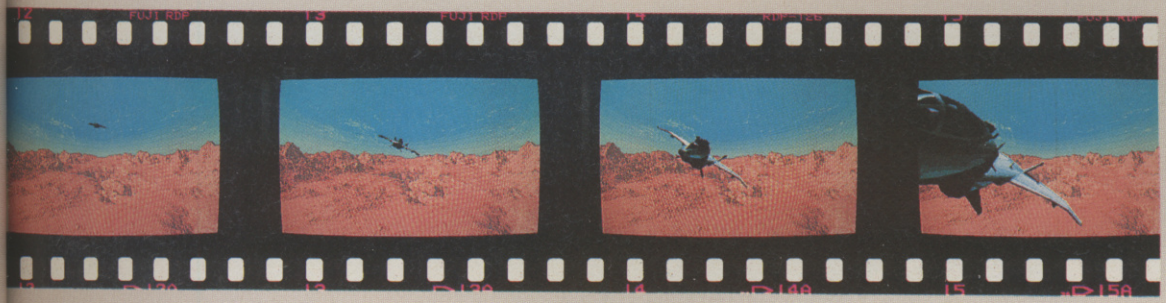


Once you've locked-on to a target and let the missile go, the program switches to a non-interactive video showing the consequence of your actions. Will the missile hit or miss the target? Full video animation relies the external shot of the missile dropping from the weapons bay, firing-up, skimming across the planet and finally detonating.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

"We're a games company, we're more likely to make a good interactive product than say Warner Bros or Columbia Pictures," offers Hetherington. "I think the whole 'interactive movie' concept is still-born. It won't happen. People are expecting to be Robocop or Tom Cruise. The technology we're using suits sci-fi and combat games. We could do *Star Wars, Top Gun, Last Starfighter,* anything of that ilk. We'd have a lot of difficulty doing *Three Men and a Baby*. Game design is our biggest worry, we've had criticism for our gameplay in the past, justifiably I might add. We can emulate movies because we've seen so many of them. 'Interactive movies' are going to come in various forms. We don't like conventional game structures spliced into video-retrieval – the video bits quickly become boring. A freeze-frame decision making game only ends up like *Dragon's Lair*. Our CD-games will have 500 megabytes of graphical and audio data organised in way that's compelling to go through. You have to make the interactive 'play' elements a reward rather than a special effect. Players will drift in and out of interactivity, a CD-game will be 10% interactive going up to near 100% in certain points. One of our greatest problems at the moment is how we communicate to the player that the interactivity is varying – when, where and how they can do things and what they can't do."





Psygnosis will enrich every CD-game by incorporating movie-style sequences. These are included to specifically link interactive portions of the game. There are no gaps between the theme, you feel as if you're playing a film. Each project will take six months to build and assemble. A further three months will be spent producing the initial storyboard and cleaning up the interactivity of the product.

"It's looking like CD-I isn't going to happen. All the hardware manufactures have got miffed waiting for Philips."

Ian Hetherington, joint-boss of Psygnosis

intuitive games crunchers. It requires discipline. We're marshalling four to five gigabytes of data," remarks Hetherington. Psygnosis has already spent six months and over £100,000 on the project. The company can't really afford to stop pushing.

The two leaders in 'interactive movies' are currently Origin and Psygnosis. Origin employs nearly 100 full-time writers, game designers, artists, programmers, music composers, sound technicians and play-testers. With games like *Wing Commander*, Origin has a better all-round package – provided players have got a powerful PC (extra RAM, hard disk, VGA graphics, CMS SoundBlaster) costing several thousand pounds.

Psygnosis will produce CD-games with images exactly like those shown here – on decks priced under £500. In sales-speak, it has a product for 'the masses, not the classes'.

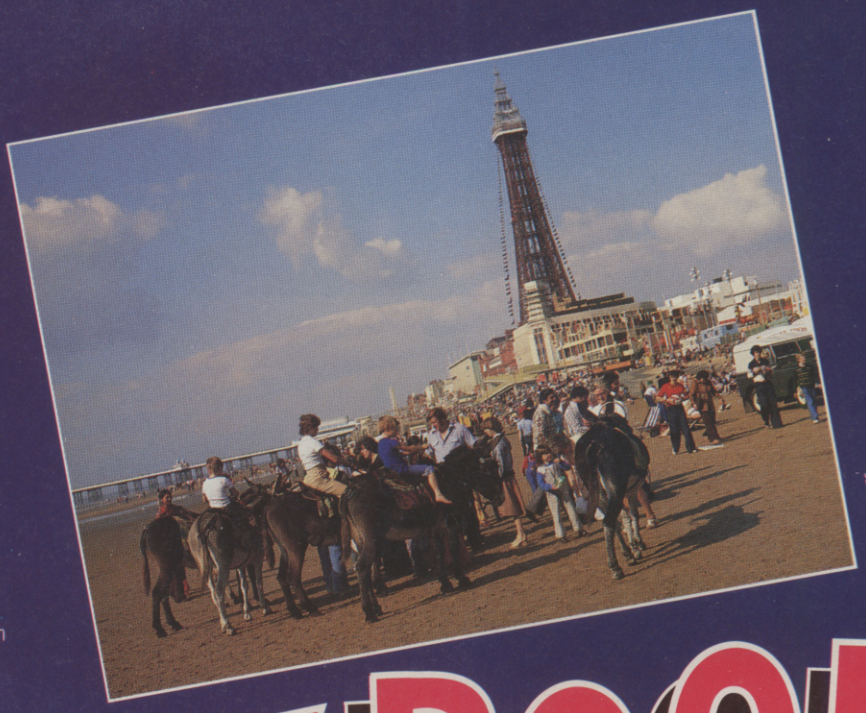
Consumers and the high-street are desperate for something new. Everybody is waiting for the hardware manufacturers to put some cheap CD-machines into the marketplace. Psygnosis is banking on a CD-ROM explosion taking place. The farsighted Liverpool-based firm could be out of floppy-disk games by Christmas 1992.

TECHBUSTERS

CD For more information on CD hardware and software see ACE 43 (contact our Back Issues Department on 0858 410510/410088)
FRACTALS are clever mathematics formulas used to create life-like scenes such as mountainous regions, coastlines, trees and water
RAY TRACING is a technique to make computer generated images look more realistic by mimicking the way rays of light bounce off objects

AUDIO-VISUALS

Psygnosis believes it has the best CD games software technology in the world. "We took a problem-solving approach," Hetherington reveals, "It's nothing to do with games design at this stage. It's a pure technology fight, the people with the best technology will win. We use whatever combination of graphics primitives appropriate: hand-drawn sprite animation, vertical/horizontal scrolling, ray-traced 3D models, polygons, fractal-generated images (landscapes, water, clouds, mist, fire) or even video-clips. Other movie-type effects are added – like camera-pans, outside/inside views, long-shots, close-ups and screen dissolves. Working on the premise that CD can deliver 128K/sec, you can either dedicate it to CD-audio or video. Dedicating it to both is possible but both will suffer. We're mixing sampled audio with graphics – you'll get compelling graphics and highly-detailed sampled sound. Speech is no problem. We'll use CD-audio when we can, when the graphical activity is minimal. We'll use the CD-audio circuitry to play samples, and those samples will be as good as those coming directly off a CD. The graphics will be calculated and drawn off- and on-line. It's a real mixed bag of graphics primitives and real-time/off-line plotting and processing. It will be as real-time as the hardware platform allows us to be. What you see on the screen is very much a composite of a whole number of things that are going on inside the machine. Every project will be soft-wired to suit every single frame seen.



REX FEATURES

BLACKPOOL ROCKS

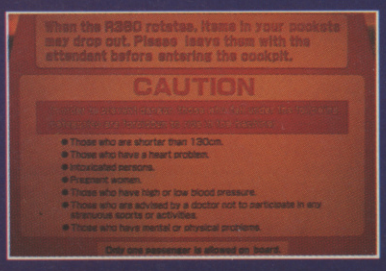
What's cold, wet and dark? No, unfortunately not a pint of Guinness. ACE visits Blackpool in Winter...

It rains, it's cold and dark and you can't get a decent pint anywhere. A Scud landing on the Golden Mile out of season would probably do about £10 millions pounds worth of improvements. But on the bright side, at least the toilets at the Winter Gardens flushed - they being the venue for the latest amusement trade bash. There are rarely surprises at this show, being held only a couple of months post-ATEI, the flagship event of the year, but ferreting around underneath the trestle tables revealed some interesting goodies.

My favourite of all, surprisingly, was a new videogame at all, but a novel variation on the Photobooth called *PhotoStar*. Now, I'm sure we are all depressingly familiar with the scenario usually associated with the run-of-the-mill Photobooth experience. Fiddly in the extreme with a flash that sends you reeling, blinded, out of the booth, only to wait an indeterminate length of time for a soggy, smelly strip of pics, which naturally, have caught you in mid-blink. Hi-tech it is not. So *Photostar* decided to bring the Photobooth into the Nineties.

The R360 has finally reached UK shores. Just make your way to Funland in the Trocadero, Picadilly Circus, and prepare to fork out £3 for the experience of a lifetime.

Atari's brave and bizarre *Tetris*-alike *Ramparts*.



Ignore this warning at your peril - especially if you've just had a heavy meal.

The loudest screams on the Pier!!!

Once you're sitting comfortably, choices are made via a touch-screen TV, four little ones or one bigun - and it's eyes forward and - FLASH. Now rub your eyes and examine the screen. There is the video frame of the shot the camera has just taken. Does it look OK? If not, you get two more goes to take something that doesn't make you look like an escaped psychopath.

Once you get outside, it's only 90 seconds before you get your dry strip of pics - and this is usefully counted down by a large digital display. So far, so unspectacularly good, eh? But the thing comes into its own by using the video technology, should you choose that option, to cut out a mug shot of you, on screen, and place it next to an image of a celeb. Fab or what? Meet John Major. Snog with Marilyn. Become the Newest Kid on the Block. Great fun and highly recommended for both utilitarian purposes and merriment.

On the more conventional front, ***RoboCop II*** made an appearance and sprouted more digitised pics than ever, bigger sprites, more varied gameplay - but somehow, somewhere in the transition from I to II, lost that extra something that made it a most excellent bash the first time around. Rather like what happened between the original movie and the follow-up, in fact. Never mind - Data East has got some better stuff up its sleeve for later in the year, including a *Mercs*-style game called *Thunder Zone*. Initial testing suggested this to be an altogether superior four-player action game....we'll check it out in detail for the next issue.

It seems only yesterday that *Tetris* made it's appearance in the arcades - but there again I am starting to get a bit senile. In fact it was at least three years ago - and now the original Russian inventor, Alexev Pajitnov, has got another PCB on display, this time from the people that made the guy rich, Bullet Proof Software.

Called *Welltris*, this has appeared on floppy, but it didn't make much of an impression. Will it do better in the arcades, where the gameplay is almost identical? Does Alexev really think that the little cartoon figure of him is cute? Will it catch on in Latvia? Only time will tell.

Talking of *Tetris*, I think Atari are bonkers, releasing *Ramparts*, but there are those whose opinions I have a sneaking, if somewhat sullen, respect of who love it. To borrow a phrase from *Points of View*, "Why, oh why?!!" The scam is this.

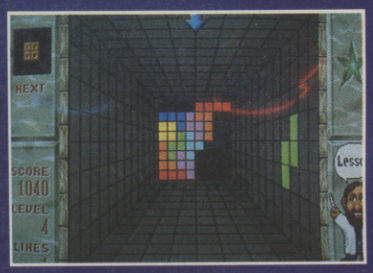
Robocop deals with the city's dirty punks in the wittily-titled *Robocop 2*.

You've got a castle containing cannons. Scene 1, you blast away at other players' castles (or, if in single-player mode, at enemy ships). They blast at you and knock down bits of your walls.

In a separate section, you are given *Tetris* shapes and have to rebuild your castle using these. If you now encompass a bigger square footage with these walls, you get extra cannons. Fail to complete a continuous wall around your keep and it's Game Over. Interesting, eh?

Well, nobody can call Atari unadventurous, releasing this, and we'll see exactly how clever a move it was in a couple of months. For the casual player, it's worth trying, if only to plumb the depths of a warped corporate mind.

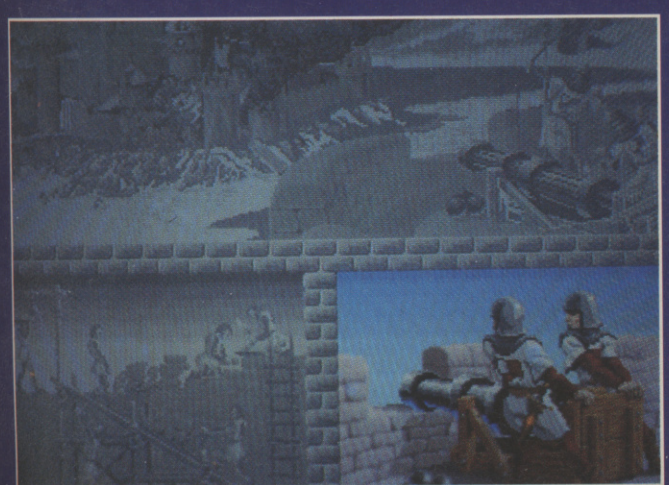
Finally, wanna have a go on an *R360*? Then make your way to the Funland arcade in the Trocadero, Piccadilly Circus, London. Easily the best arcade in the country, for the princely sum of £3 per go, you can participate in the ultimate coin-op experience. It's a must is you can make it there - and unlike all other London arcades, you don't have to be over-18 to get in. But don't eat a big breakfast first, eh? ■



Welltris **didn't wow 'em on the PC. Will it do better in the arcades? And look out Mario, here comes Alexev!**

John Cook, ACE's arcade correspondent, gives Marilyn the eye thanks to *Photostar*.

Your sad little dreams of being seen with the stars can now become reality. Kylie's bad enough but John Major?!?!?!?!?!?!



Fire! Are we talking about the game now or what Atari should do to the guy who gave this project the go-ahead?

CHUCK ROCK

Chuck Rock's peaceful existence has been shattered by the kidnapping of his beautiful wife Ophelia by the evil Gary Gritter.

In his quest to find her, Chuck kicks and belly butts his way through over 500 screens played over 25 comical zones of exciting and addictive gameplay.

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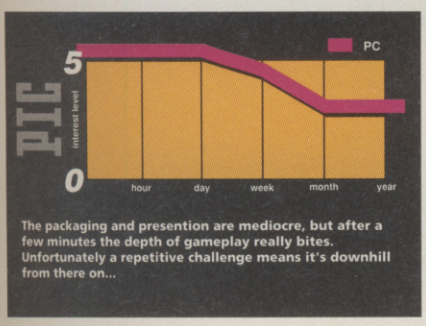
SCREEN TEST

Switchblade II from Gremlin. Looks like a console game, plays like a console game... but it's on an Amiga! What will they come up with next?

Brat from Imageworks. Will you feel like a right 'lemming' if you don't get this 'save a cutey' game? Find out for yourself, beginning on page 76.

ACE THREE-PAGERS!

In our opinion, the merry merry month of May warrants something a little special, hence the introduction of our three-page special reviews. A select few games each month will receive this even more depthy treatment from now on. It's not necessarily the highest scoring titles which end up on these pages; it's those about which which there's simply more to say.

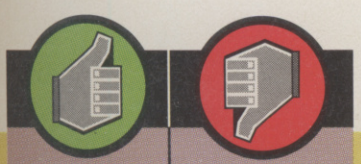


The packaging and presention are mediocre, but after a few minutes the depth of gameplay really bites. Unfortunately a repetitive challenge means it's downhill from there on...

The PIC – *Predicted Interest Curve* – is the most sophisticated reviewing tool around.

The curve is divided into six sections, indicating the player's adrenalin level after one minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month, and one year. And this can tell you a lot more about a game than just the interest levels...

The minute, hour, and day ratings can tell you a lot too. If there's a dip here, followed by a rise, you've got a game that may take a bit of getting into. Alternatively, the graphics may put you off for a while until the gameplay starts to grip. Check out the PIC comment for more details.



- Lots of cutesy characters
- Fascinating 3D sections.
- The two player link-up option for stage 16

- Twelve disks to swap!
- No colour on some stages
- No joystick or mouse control option

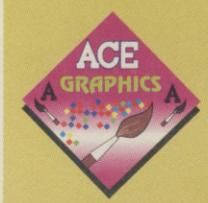
We won't rate a game unless it represents what you'll find on the shelves. If a game's not finished, we won't rate it. Instead we give it an ACE Preplay verdict panel that tells you how we think it's shaping up. In most cases, a full review of the finished game will follow in a later issue.

ACE AWARDS

ACE always awards seals of approval for outstanding software performance. If a game really breaks the boundaries in sound, graphics, or originality you'll see the appropriate ACE Award flash on the review. Unless it's truly dire – in which case it'll get the ACE Turkey award. Software houses: you have been warned!

ACE only awards this one to games of outstanding quality. A 900+ game is a classic title, recommended without hesitation.

Originality counts for a lot these days, and any games that have it deserve a special mention. This ACE award is reserved specifically for these rare games.



One of the first things to grab you in a game is its graphics. Games that redefine the state-of-the-art get this seal of approval from ACE.

Sound is the 'forgotten' aspect of games – but can make or break them. ACE only awards this one to brilliant use of audio in a game.

THE LINE UP

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1511

SWITCH

Console-quality graphics arrive on the Amiga thanks to GREMLIN's top-notch sequel.

ACE TrailBlazer

Sequels to shoot-em-ups are generally to be taken with a pinch of salt. While they're often technical improvements over the original, it's a rare event when these games, upon close inspection, contain much more than some different levels and more power-ups.

Switchblade II, though, is a different matter altogether. It certainly scores no points for its plotline, or it's innovative approach; it's a side-on scrolling shoot out. However, the implementation of the gameplay and graphics make it a hit.

The player's aim is to explore and destroy six levels of an alien world, wiping out all in his path using one of six weapons systems. A simple enough premise, and one seen in a hundred other games, but rarely implemented with such finesse.

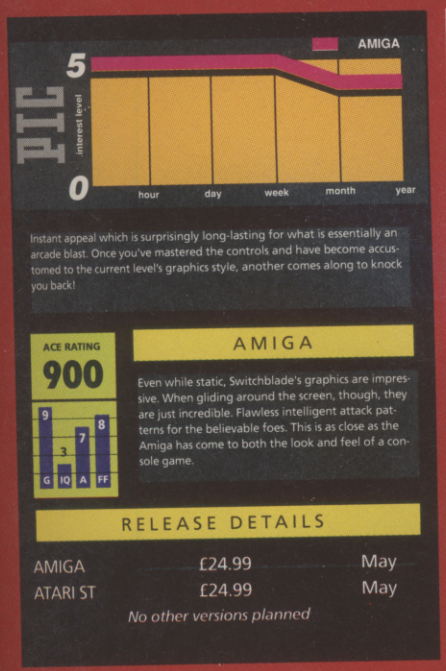
As is clear from the graphics, the influence of Japanese console games is strong, with the lead character depicted as a wide-eyed Asiatic with raven hair and a bionic arm from which the firepower issues. The backdrops, too, have a strong primary-colour style which work especially well with the excellent scrolling routines. Each level has a different mood; some being intensely populated with robots, others being sparse enough for you to explore and discover secret rooms and bonuses.

Control over the character is excellent. He can run, jump, climb, squat and - by holding the stick down and then flicking it up - superjump his way through the levels. Once airborne, he had turn around to shoot in different directions, land on moving platforms or avoid enemy assaults.

The bad guys come in a number of forms. There are basic flying drone ships which always appear in packs and are the most common foes. Their intelligent homing patterns make them especially difficult to deal with, since they are circling you almost as soon as they have appeared on the screen, and give you little time to turn and fight. Next are the robots who walk upright along flat areas of ground. Slightly easier to deal with, they follow set patterns and can be ambushed with prudent use of the laser.

If that were not enough there are air-raids from supersonic jets which fly overhead dropping deadly sets of bombs. Of all the enemies to combat, it's these jets which cause the most aggravation, hitting you with up to six rockets at one time.

HBLADE II

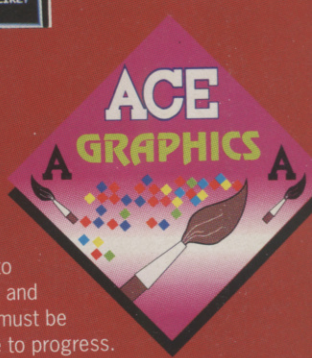


Cunningly designed robots capable of firing in all directions trundle along by your feet at all times. The best policy is to crouch and fire ising the laser-beam.

Behind the waterfall (and through the flashing portal) is the shop. A brief respite in the action gives you pause to plan your next move.

Battling with the walking gun at the end of the mountain level. Close quarters fighting is handled with your laser knife.

Inside the shop you can purchase extra weapons using coins and tokens collected elsewhere in the level.

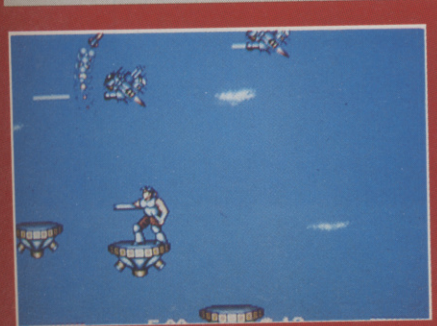


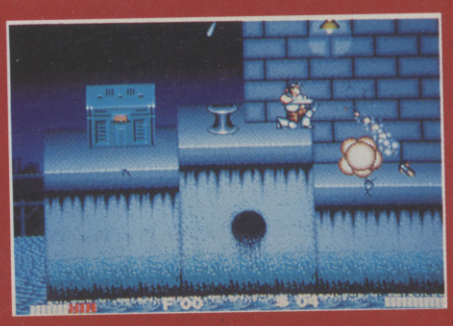
IT'S ALL IN THE GRAPHICS...

It's the visuals of *Switchblade II* which are so instantly appealing, and the more you look, the more you realise the scale of the work which has gone into them. Not only is the style accurately tailored to give the feel of a high-tech Japanese product, it's stuffed full of detail too!

The central character sends up little clouds of smoke when he jumps down off a ledge. Point indicators fly up the screen when you collect bonuses. Every enemy is a bizarre animated hybrid of robot and animal. Steel bugs crawl around the floor, shooting missiles out from their armour-plated hides.

And all the design excellence is backed up by a smooth-scrolling routine ensuring you have a full view of the action at all times.





Gun emplacement and parachuting bombs add to the volume of the attack, and each source of damage must be shot out swiftly if you are to progress.

Taking a hit from whatever source will deplete your energy and cause your character to jump backwards in pain and surprise. Leaving him in a dangerous situation can be fatal, since he can be forced to jump back into even more incoming fire, and while the safety of a period of invincibility after each hit is welcome, it doesn't last long.

However, despite the fact that *Switchblade* demands a great deal of the player, and it'll probably take even the toughest gamer a good month to complete, it's frustration factor is incredibly low. It doesn't demand pixel-perfect jumps and leaps. And you can take a lot of damage before you actually peg out. Instead of finishing you off with the first hit, the aliens wear you down with a never-ending barrage of ☞

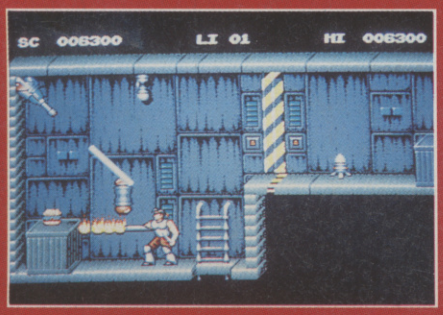
assaults. If you're quick enough to get out of a trouble spot before the bad guys can sink their teeth into you, you'll be alright.

In order to offer some respite from the frenetic pitch of the action, bonus rooms have been included which, on the whole, offer safe haven from the enemy onslaught for a few moments. Here extra power (in the shape of hamburgers and pizzas - sound familiar?) can be collected and bonus points amassed.

Perhaps unlike any other Amiga game to date, *Switchblade II* successfully provides the feel of a console title. It's not quite like playing a coin-op, and again, its distinct from playing any of the other shoot-em-ups on the Amiga. It offers a feeling of easily achieved skill, allowing mastery of the central character to be picked up in a flash. Even without playing with a purpose, there's fun enough to be had just watching the game happen all around you. Incredible!

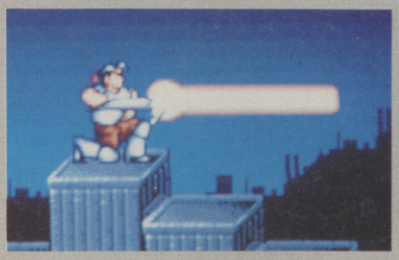
● Jim Douglas

Use of the super-jump will keep you out of terra-based difficulties, but may result in unforseen disasters up-top.



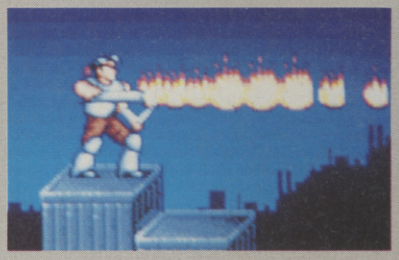
HARDWIRED HARDWARE

SwitchBlade II offers the player an excellent choice of weapons systems, each vital during a particular stage of the game. They're selected using keys 1-5.

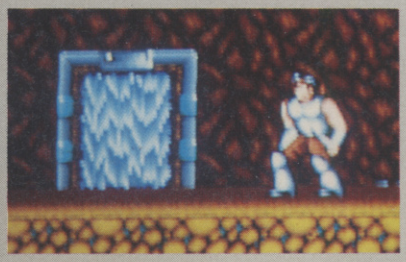


Laser Beam - A straight beam of incredible power spells instant disintegration for anything in its path.

Normal Fire - Rapid-firing bolts of energy. Ideal for inflicting multiple hits on a large number of enemies. Not especially potent, however.



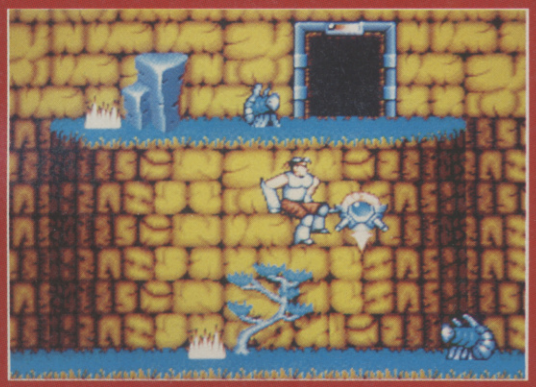
Flame Thrower - Blistering all in its range, the flame thrower will turn virtually anything into a melted lump of goo.



Knife - For use at close quarters only. This weapon automatically comes into play if an enemy is right on top of you. It will destroy most foes with one hit.

Robotic Shiruken - Spinning stars of high-tensile metal inflicting high damage on biological foes.

Homing Missiles - Intelligent rockets which track and attack all enemies in your vicinity.

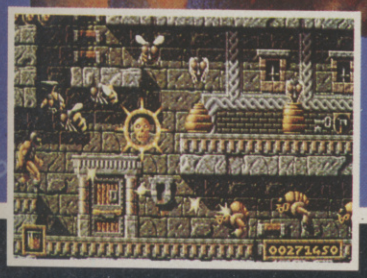


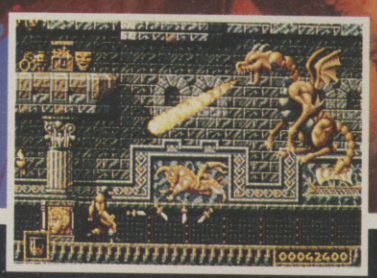
◀ The homing missile in action is a fearsome addition to your arsenal. It curves and swerves around, dealing with the most dangerous foe first. However, you can only fire one shot at a time.

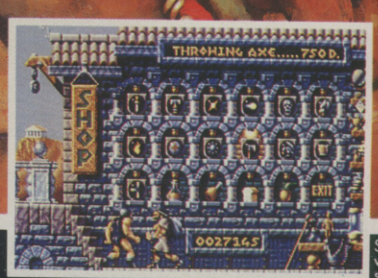
▲ Extra energy can be obtained by eating burgers and pizzas throughout the game. Usually, though, you lose just as much energy as you collect by blundering into traps like this.

GODS

THE BITMAP BROTHERS







ST version shown

Are you bored of games that pose no real challenge? Mindless adversaries that can't fight back? Dumb nasties who just ask to be slaughtered?
GODS is a complete departure!

Featuring a revolutionary system of artificial intelligence, your opponents react to your actions and interact with the environment.
Perhaps guile will achieve more than brute strength! Your cunning, as well as skill with the fearsome array of weapons at your disposal, are needed equally to overcome the enemy...

Award-winning Bitmap graphics and music by Nation 12 make this their most exciting game ever...

Have you got what it takes to be a GOD?

Amiga, ST, PC

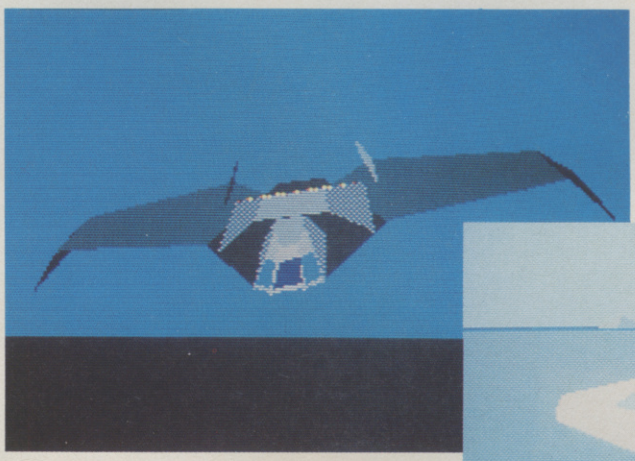
TM BITMAP BROTHERS

C1, Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, London E1 9SS
© 1991 The Bitmap Brothers. Published by Renegade

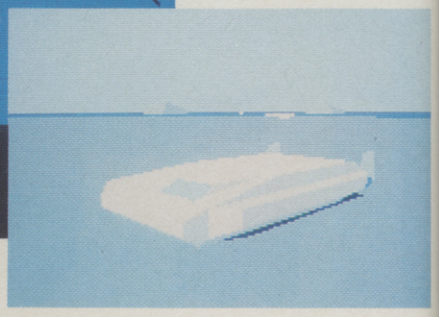
Renegade

ANY OLD ION

PSYGNOSIS go on the warpath and mix molecules in two new releases



There are six combat vehicles for you to thrash and crash: three ground-based (light tank, heavy tank and hovercraft) and three air-based (helicopter, jet fighter and - as shown here - bomber). Not all vehicles will be available for you from the start of the game: some will have to be researched and developed by the lab boys before you can give 'em a spin.



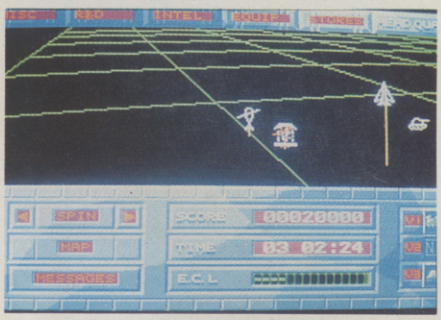
ACE PREPLAY

- Easy to control and fun to play.
- Fast, well-defined 3D-polygon objects.
- Six interesting vehicles to try out that each have unique look and 'feel'.
- Lots of nice touches, such as smoking wreckage left by destroyed vehicles and enemy engine noises getting louder as they approach.
- The strategy and resource-management game aspects add complementary depth to the 3D action.

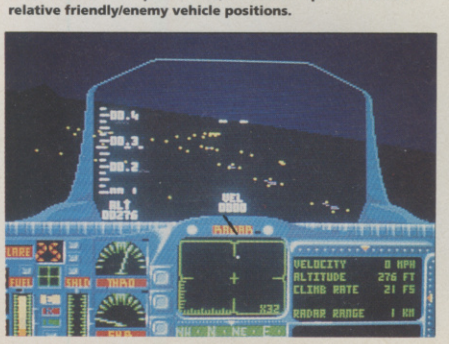
- The 3D, though fast, lacks aesthetic frills.
- Six missions, although they'll take quite a while to complete, are not that many.
- A distinct 'look' to each vehicle-type's cockpit would have helped prevent confusion when switching between them.

Release Details

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW



There are two map screens: a typical overhead plan view and this, rather more sophisticated, 3D-vector representation of relative friendly/enemy vehicle positions.



If you haven't thought about R&D-ing night-sights and fitting them to your craft then you could easily find yourself having to make a risky shot in the dark. At the worst you can try and navigate using the lights from the ground installations.

ARMOUR-GEDDON

Most 3D-polygon games give you the opportunity to pilot a specific type of aircraft or tank, but Psygnosis' latest gives you the chance to control not one, not two, but SIX types of vehicle! On the ground you can take either a nifty light tank, a lumbering heavy tank or a futuristic hovercraft for a spin, while in the air you can pilot an attack helicopter, a particularly menacing-looking bomber or, if you feel the need for speed, a jet fighter.

The convoluted game scenario goes like this: a terrible and tragic nuclear war is devastating the once-beautiful planet. A lucky few have hidden themselves away in deep underground bunkers to ride out the storm, while the survivors on the surface have to endure severe hardship while the planet's ecosytem struggles to return to some semblance of normality.

Over the hard years the surface-dwellers gradually grow to resent the fortunates safely tucked away in their clean subterranean havens. A terrible and ultimate revenge is planned; construction begins on a giant Doomsday weapon that, once activated, will mean the end of all life on the planet. The returning cave dwellers barely have time to get used to the harsh glare of natural light before they learn of their bitter enemy's plot.

As commander of the cave-dwellers, you have direct your meagre forces and find the five parts of a neutron bomb, with which you can destroy the Doomsday weapon and prevent Armaggedon. Thus the game neatly splits into a series of six missions: five to find the bomb parts and the sixth to locate the enemy weapon and destroy it.

You have a limited number of scientists and technicians who can respectively invent and build weapons and vehicles. Raw materials can be found littering the landscape and brought back to base for processing. However, if there isn't time for such scavenging you can recycle un-needed equipment.

You can have a maximum of six vehicles in play at any one time, using the function keys to toggle between them. Supplies permitting, they could all be tanks, say, or a mixture of the vehicle types - the choice is yours, depending on your assessment of mission requirements.

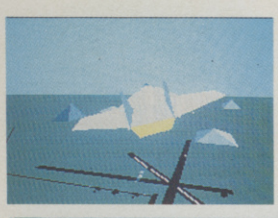
Each vehicle had space for three payloads, ranging from the usual lasers, missiles and rockets to fuel refill tanks and teleporter pods (particularly useful for getting the low-mileage tanks from A to B). Using a simple select-and-drag icon system it's simplicity itself to get your mean machines tooled up and ready to rock.

Now the fun really begins. Once out of the base you'll find there's very little time to go sight-seeing - a pity, as the landscape is nicely detailed - because the enemy will soon be swarming around you like bees around the proverbial honey pot. Unfortunately the enemy aren't as stupid as bees - enemy jets will tend to attack a ground vehicle from behind, for example, so that it can't be shot at in return.

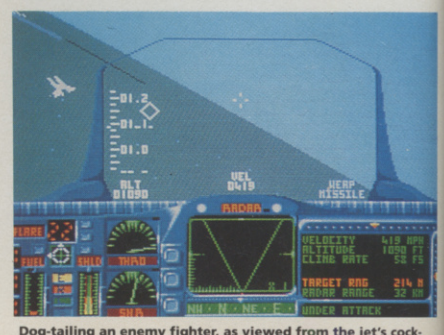
The 3D objects are well-designed and interesting to look at, though they lack the sort of graphic frills we've come to expect from games such as *Cybercon III*, such as cylinders and discs. However (and more importantly) they move quickly and very smoothly, so this can easily be forgiven.

Overall, *Armour-Geddon*, awful title-pun apart, looks like being an exceptionally good game, with a great deal of depth behind Psygnosis' traditional glossy visuals. The only major reservation is that six missions may not be enough to keep the seasoned war veteran going for too long. But I guess only time - and the full ACE review - will tell...

● David Upchurch



Here's the jet fighter making a pass over the home landing strip. Eagle-eyed readers may be able to spot the tell-tale column of smoke rising from the wreckage of a previously-unsuccessful take-off.



Dog-tailing an enemy fighter, as viewed from the jet's cockpit. Unlike many other 3D games around there's no chance of you being left in peace for long - this guy has three pals in the vicinity all with the express aim of seeing you make a 'forced' landing tail-up.

ATOMINO

Those with a GCSE in Chemistry will probably be able to get a handle on the concept of this game far more easily than their less-scientific friends. Basically it's all about valency, or the number of bonds different atoms can make with other atoms. For example, hydrogen has a valency of one while helium has a valency of two. Thus, to make a complete molecule (i.e. have no spare bonds floating about) you could stick two hydrogens to a helium or just stick two heliums together. Simple, isn't it? Isn't it?

Okay, chemistry lesson out of the way. The aim of the game is to form a given number of complete molecules from randomly-alotted atoms, which range in valency from one to four. As you deliberate over where to put your current atom, more are constantly appearing - if your beacklog gets too high or the timer counts down to zero (yes, it's all against the clock) then the game's up.

As you progress up the game levels new problems are thrown at you, like each molecule has to be made up of a minimum number of atoms, or you've got to make the molecule fit a given space, or the molecules have got to be built around on-screen obstacles.

Now, this probably sounds about as much fun as assembling machine code by hand but wait a second. Remember how fascinating *Tetris* sounded in concept (i.e. not at all) but how addictive it was in practice? *Atomino* is the same. Until you've had a go you're unlikely to see the appeal - I admit I had to be forcibly removed from the computer.

ACE PREPLAY

- The concept, although seemingly complex, is in fact very simple and the game takes absolutely no time to grab its hooks into you.
- Incentive to return is increased by the appearance of special 'challenge' and bonus screens.
- The graphics are far more attractive than those usually found in puzzle-type games, yet functional and uncluttered - the electrons whizzing around the atoms are very nice and help gameplay by drawing your attention to available bonds.
- Password system allows player to skip completed levels.
- The rather unfortunate 'chemistry lesson' scenario may turn people off.
- The planned 67 levels may not last that long.

Release Details

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	Early May
IBM PC	TBA	TBA

This is one of the very earliest screens and it's dead simple. You have to complete just one molecule and four two-valence atoms are very easy to get rid of. Completed molecules disappear leaving plenty of space for new construction.

Later screens challenge you to fit the atoms into a certain shape. Again, this is an easy one, but it gets much tougher.

The grey-patterned blocks can not be built over and thus have to be built around. Be careful but more importantly be quick... time is running out.

AWESOME

Awesome was one of the most hardware intensive games released for the Amiga, using its blitters and custom chips to the full to stunning effect. ST owners (and smug Amiga owners) will naturally be a little skeptical of the mega-game converting well, if at all, to the less well-endowed but still perfectly-formed Atari 16-bitter.

Well, the news is good... very good, in fact. Indeed, it's so good that it's a little hard to believe that Reflections have actually pulled it off. Apart from a negligible decrease in speed and colour, the ST game is identical to the Amiga one, right down to the multi-directional parallax scrolling, giant sprites and punchy sound - even the marvellous movie-like intro's there. Definitely one to wipe the smile off the face of complacent Amiga owners!

They said it couldn't be done, but Reflections prove them wrong. The pre-planetfall battle against the giant space snake is just as impressive on the ST as it was on the Amiga.

"Doctor ACE, there's a patient waiting for you in Room 3." Heh, heh, heh! If they're not ill when they come in they are when they leave!

LIFE & DEATH 2

Send them to the cemetery! Trained by the *General Hospital* and *Casualty* surgical soaps on television, this is your chance for some interactive medical matters. In the original surgery simulation you were restricted to stomach operations but with *Life and Death 2* you can have a crack at the brain. *Driller Killer* has nothing on this game.

Not many people know the A-Z of brain surgery, so you glean information as you go along. The manual doesn't give much away, except for a brilliant disclaimer, so it's very much 'click and cross your fingers'. Your job is to diagnose patients, prescribe treatments or drugs and when absolutely necessary - operate. You make tracks around the hospital using a representation of the Neurosurgery ward. Here you move between the patient examination rooms, administration offices, lecture hall, cafeteria and operating theatre. If you visit the rooms housing the CAT and MRI scanners or the x-ray and angiography labs, technicians will explain what these machines do and how to interpret their findings. A visit to the morgue reveals your body count - how many people you've managed to kill through improper diagnosis or shoddy work on the operating table.

The brain surgeon's day follows a pretty regular pattern. An attractive young woman is waiting for you in cubical three. She has been brought to the emergency room in a semiconscious state, the paramedics found her on the floor unable to move. Best to try a physical examination. A click on the patient's head, torso or legs produces a close-up and a set of tools to 'play' with. Shine a light in her eyes, stick a pin in her arms and hit her knees with a hammer. Or should that be hit her over the head with a hammer and stick a pin in her eye? Give it a go; experimentation is the only way to learn. Surgeons don't have to be sadists, but it helps pass the time.

The poor woman isn't looking very well. She has slurred speech, abnormal dilation and no reaction to light in her left eye and weakness in the left arm and leg. Further tests are needed. The CAT (Computer Assisted Tomography) scan reveals a large white spot in the top left section of her brain, MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) shows a dark region, and a displacement of blood vessels is seen by an angiography. The last test is a procedure whereby a contrast dye is injected into the patient's bloodstream and x-rays are taken to access the integrity of blood vessels. You have to be careful when testing patients as these lab experiments can kill people with pacemakers or allergies.

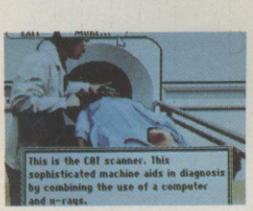
Now consult your DIY book of neurosurgery to pinpoint her disease. Is she a junkie? A cocaine addict has both pupils dilated. No. Does she need psychological treatment? Possibly. What about a subdural hematoma? This is a collection of blood clots in the subdural space between the brain and dura mater. Headache, confusion and other abnormal mental behaviour are all symptoms. Neurological examination will reveal a dilation of the pupil on the same side of injury. Speech will be slurred if the injury is on the left. Nice one, we have confirmation of a subdural hematoma which means she needs to be operated on. I hope she's got good medical insurance.

A deadly silence descends upon the operating theatre. The woman, shaved better than a skinhead, is laying on the slab. You reach for the scalpel. Whoops, a piece of fluff in your mouse has just made your hand slip. You've cut her right ear off! Surgery is over for the day and you didn't even get the chance to use the trephine drill (bores holes in the skull), irrigator (lubricator to prevent heat build-up when drilling) or fish hooks (anchors the scalp flap away from the skull). Looks like you're going to get a severe ticking off from the senior doctor. Better clean the mouse before the next patient.

Life and Death 2 is good fun and very educational. The graphics are just the right balance between cartoony and realistic images, I hate to think what a CD-I version with real video footage would look like (who would you get to model for messed-up operations?). You feel a great sense of satisfaction after correctly diagnosing a patient but following the correct procedures can be a drag. I spent more time back in the classroom than I did curing patients. Once you've reached the top of your profession and successfully performed your first brain-job, there is little left to come back to. Still, I can't wait for *Life and Death 3: Removal of the Stomach Bag.*

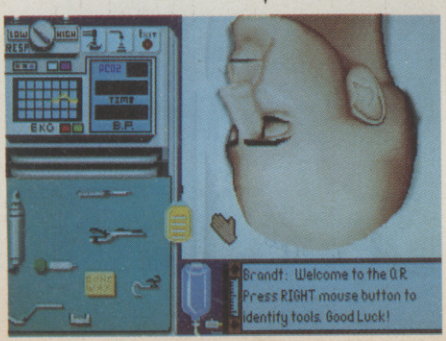
● Rik Haynes

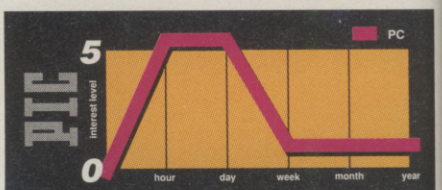
Oh dear, this woman seems very poorly. Looks like another one for the table, but I'd better go through the routine.



In for a CAT scan she goes. Doesn't really matter what the result is - she's going under the knife irrespective.

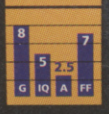
My turn to operate. I think I'll start with the bone saw....





A long wait before you start because it takes an absolute age to install on hard disk. *Life and Death 2* is a great 'gross-out' which will keep you plugging at the brain until you've managed a successful operation. Rather repetitive gameplay means you'll only come back to it when you want to shock your granny.

ACE RATING **799**



IBM PC

The quality of 256-colour VGA graphics shine through. More blood spurting out would have been a bonus though. *Life and Death 2* is not one for a green screen 'spreadsheet PC', this multi-megabyte surgical sim takes a large chunk out of anybodies hard disk. Supports VGA, EGA and Tandy graphics, plus SoundBlaster, RealSound and AdLib soundboards. The only trouble is, where do you go after you've had a brain in your hands?

RELEASE DETAILS

IBM PC	£24.99	OUT NOW

Carry on, Doctor!

SOFTWARE TOOLWORKS and MINDSCAPE put mind over matter...

Crystals of Arborea

A Strategic Role-Playing Challenge

Morgoth, Lord of Chaos, he who brings nothing but death, worships nothing but destruction has infected your world with his evil.

In sorrow and anger the gods drown all except the land of Arborea, home of the four sacred crystals of harmony, stolen by Morgoth and his servants.

In a race against Chaos, Prince Jarel and a band of trusted companions must find the crystals and restore them to their sacred shrines. To fail is to lose everything.

- A fascinating blend of strategy and role-playing.
- Unique large screen 3D perspective.
- Over 16000 locations to visit.
- Brain-teasing puzzles.
- Strategic fight sequences, using force of arms and magic powers.
- Independently controllable characters.
- Choose and customise your own team.
- Beautiful atmospheric graphics.

Silmarils

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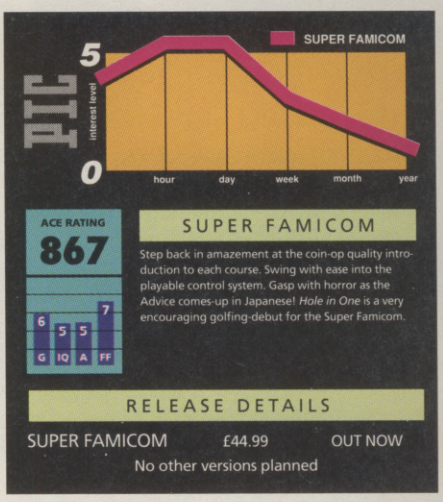
AMIGA • ST • PC

MARKETED BY

PALACE SOFTWARE

(Left) Is this a green game of Zaxxon? Not likely, matey. *Hole in One* allows you to view the course with a 3D-slant. Players use this facility to preview any tricky hills and bumps. (Below) Will you putt this shot? A quick double-click of the fire button, that's what's needed here! (Bottom) These things are sent to try us. Just when you think you're going to get a birdie this screen suddenly appears showing the reluctant golf-ball bouncing off the side of the hole. Don't despair. The Japanese programmers like to have a joke. So, sometimes, the ball actually goes in. These games programmers are a laugh a minute you know, this reminds me of the frightfully amusing story when...

hole in



Special thanks to Shekhana Consoles (081 340 8565) for supplying these carts.

Is HALKEN completely bunkers about golf?

I love the sound of breaking grass. Nobody actually knows where the great game of golf originated from. Despite this oversight, there's a version of golf on every console and computer system on the market. Total addicts can even play an electronic version of golf as they walk between holes! So how does the first Super Famicom golf-simulation compare to the competition?

Makers Halken have signed up a famous Japanese golfer to endorse this golf-sim, but we'd never seen him before. Up to four players can play the game, and it's a real bonus if one of them is fluent in Japanese. You can get by without this skill, if you don't mind losing out on the oriental golfing advice.

You're ready to start play... once you've entered your four-digit initials (in Japanese or English), pawed over your caddy kit and 'flown' through an impressive 3D graphic overview of the next hole in this 18-hole adventure.

Everything is kept simple. Instead of a three-dimensional view of the course, as in famous computer golf-sims Leaderboard and PGA Tour Golf, Hole in One is played over a scrolling top-down view of the action. A panel on the left shows the complete map of the current hole while the main display is taken-up by a magnified view of your immediate surroundings. This is supplemented by various information and control boxes which are overlaid on-top. Before you make a shot, you can switch to a 'topographical' 3D-map to see the lie of the land, replay your previous shot or get that Japanese advice mentioned earlier. The 3D-map is a boon for beginners who will eventually discover the colour contour changes in the over-head display.

Don't let the supermarket-style music playing in the background put you off your stroke. The occasional spesh effect is great, especially if you miss a putt.

You choose the direction of the shot using a cursor. Click. A graphic-box is displayed showing the condition of the ground underneath the golf-ball. Click. Select your club. Click. Change your stance. Click. Now for the interesting bit. A small golf-player, encircled by a colour-graduated bar for determining the power and accuracy of your swing, appears in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen. Click. The miniature golfer takes a back-swing, the further he goes the more powerful the shot. Click. He then starts pulling-down to

(Top) Over to the leaderboard for a quick look at the results. Not a very good effort on the 10th! (Above) A particularly nasty water hazard lies before us. Many is the time I've seen a golf-ball skim across the water only to dive five millimetres from the edge of the grass.

hit the ball. Click when he reaches the green marker (this reflects the accuracy of the shot, the nearer the better). You've just made your shot. It's that easy. Now, you just sit back in horror as the golf-ball skims over the water hazard, bumps off a tree and drops into a sand-bunker!

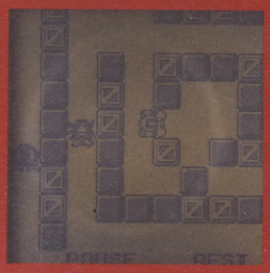
The putting sequence is a little more subtle but works on the same principle. If you're near a hole, just perform a quick double-click for the best results. Occasionally, the display changes to a 'digitised' close-up of the hole. This normally occurs when you just miss a putt, though don't think the worse if this screen comes up – sometimes the ball goes in the hole to keep you off-guard.

The graphics and sound are pretty standard apart from the three-dimensional overview sequences which really show-off the graphics capabilities of the Super Famicom. No, it's the pleasurable easy-flowing gameplay and challenging course that sets *Hole in One* apart from the rest of the golf-pack. Highly recommended, even if you're not a golfing fanatic.

● Rik Haynes

GREMLINS 2

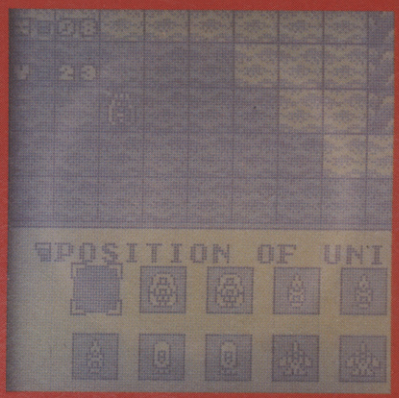
The new batch arrives on Gameboy



Bomb the bugs with your bull-dozer buggie in Battle Ball.

Don't get them wet. Don't expose them to light. Don't feed them after midnight. Gremlins are back...

Power Mission, just like the paper and pencil version of 'Battleships', only it costs a lot more. Hurrah!



Beware! Those cute bundles of fur who turn into little monsters at the first sight of light, drop of water or midnight snack are back. Based around the second movie, *Gremlins 2 - The New Batch* is a horizontally-scrolling action game consisting of four stages, two bonus sections, three demos, and a boss sprite waiting at the end of each level. You control Gizmo as he tries to combat his evil Gremlin cousins inside the Clamp Centre in New York. Along the way you encounter Electric, Daffy and Spider Gremlins. You need to pick-up special items, such as pencils and a cassette radio, to combat these nasty creatures. The game is in the true tradition of console arcade adventures and includes plenty of blocks and conveyor belts to jump on, thorns and 'falls' to hurt you, and the odd surprise like a block that punches. *Gremlins 2* is the best Gameboy release we've played since Contra.

BATTLE BULL

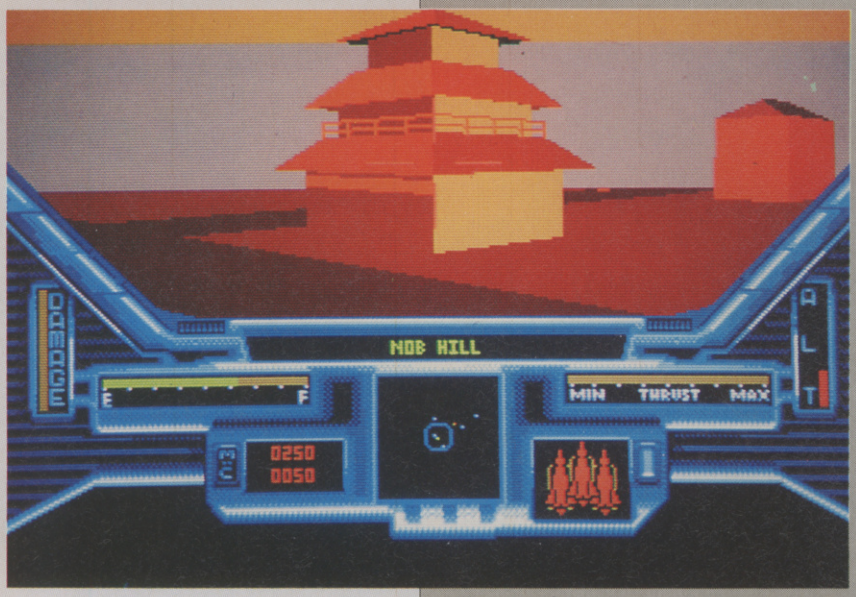
Your Gameboy goes to Mondo Oro

Disaster has struck the deep space mining operation on Perseus VI. Remote control mining robots in the Mondo Oro 8 mine have been infected with a computer virus that has caused them to go berserk and attack anything that enters the mine. The Company has enlisted your services to clean-up this messy little problem. There are 48 levels to Mondo Oro and every one is littered with ore blocks. Using a specially modified combat dozer, dubbed Battle Bull, you have a set amount of time to clear the stage and collect your bonus. In-between each level there's a chance to equip your Bull with an improved engine, shovel, jump capability and weapon system – provided you've got the cash. This arcade puzzle game also includes a two-player link option. We didn't take to *Battle Bull*, it's one of those strange oddball Gameboy titles that suddenly arrive on the scene only to disappear even faster.

POWER MISSION

War declared on Gameboy players

The boys-own paper and pen game of Battleships has been revamped by NTVIC in Japan. *Power Mission* simulates a sea battle against an enemy fleet, controlled by Artificial Intelligence or another human player. You and your enemy control fleets of ten units ranging from destroyers and flagships to submarines and fighters. The battle-map is divided into 28x28 squares which include land, shallow waters and deep sea. You and your enemy take turns to deploy your fleet and attack eachother's forces. The key to mastering *Power Mission* is using strategy and radar to locate and attack the enemy's fleet. The player who sinks their enemy's Flagship first, wins. Talk about over-complicating a brilliantly simple idea. Not too bad in two-player link-mode, though you'd probably have just as much fun with couple of pens and pieces of paper – at a fraction of the cost. A good game for train-spotters who don't have any friends.



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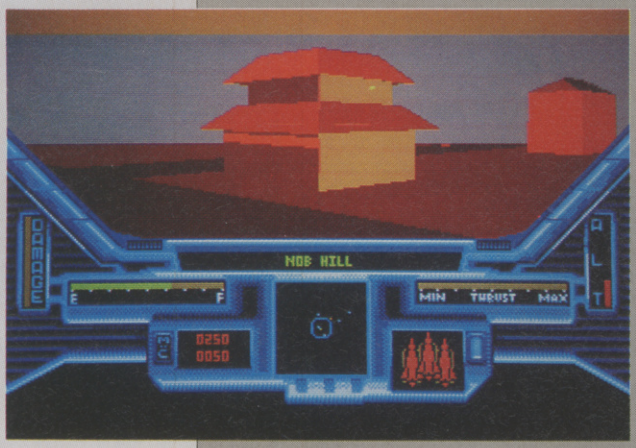
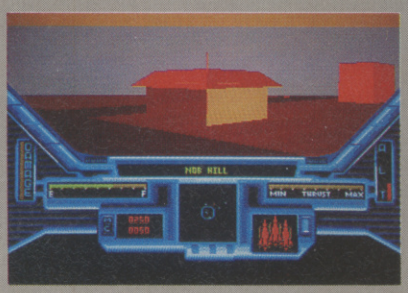


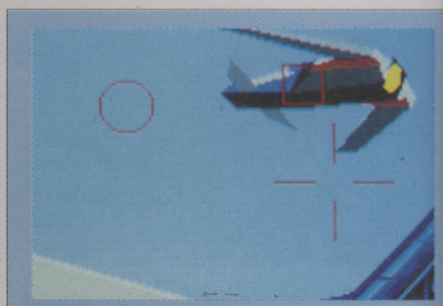
...and now...



...you don't!

The changing face of San Francisco as viewed in high, medium and low detail. The game's fast even in high detail mode, but you'll get a smoother ride in low.

On the first mission there's an option to select the 'Tourist view', which switches off the Cloud 'wall' and gives you an unhindered view of 'Frisco. Things slow down pretty badly, though, so you won't want to keep it on too long. The city is closely modelled on the real 'Frisco, and is made up of over 2500 individual buildings.



After a nail-biting slalom through the streets and alleys of San Francisco, you drive a perp into the open skies above the Cloud. You've got one net left to make the catch, so make it count...

ACE TrailBlazer

the KILLING CLOUD

IMAGEWORKS prove that every cloud has a silver lining

San Francisco is under siege. A vast mysterious cloud of non-dispersible toxic fog, one-hundred feet deep, has rolled in from the bay and enveloped the once-beautiful city. The only ones who dare venture from their vacuum-sealed shelters onto the poisoned streets have to be heavily protected... and not just from the deadly smog. Criminal gangs, taking advantage of a police force in tatters, have run riot. And the worst of a particularly bad bunch are the vicious and psychotic Black Angels.

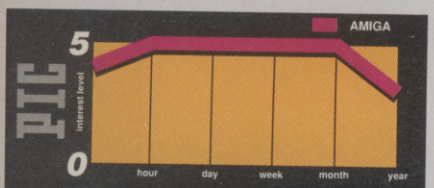
It's your job, as one of the few able-bodied cops left in the San Francisco Police Department, to try and restore law and order to the streets, and perhaps discover the terrible secret of the Killing Cloud...

Each day starts bright and early in the Station House Briefing Room. Here you learn of the day's mission, and by accessing the crime file you can get some background on any suspects. You'll need back up in the field, and by calling up a map of the city precincts you can dispatch nets and Pups - but more of them later. One trip to the armoury later you're on your own in urban hell.

But things aren't all bad. The Frisco fuzz no longer have to pound the streets on foot, but ride state-of-the-art XB500 hoverbikes - this is 1997, after all. As standard the 'bikes are fitted with 7.62mm machine guns and 30mm cannons - which, as a certain veteran from the Frisco beat would say, could blow your head clean off. The only problem is that the gangs have got them too.

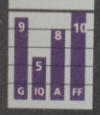
While on duty, remember - you're a cop, not a killer. It's your job to uphold the Law, not use it as an excuse to go around blowing away the nearest punk who looks at you in a funny way... which is why you've got nets.

Nets are the only safe way of snaring your prey, especially an airborne one. The net missiles release a high-tensile mesh that smothers the targeted vehicle, slowly bringing it to



The front-end is patchy, with a so-so theme tune being redeemed by some sombre and moody Station House graphics. The easy-to-fly XB500 provides instant satisfaction as you glide smoothly around the city, yet the ten missions provide plenty of well-judged challenge.

ACE RATING
915



AMIGA

Killing Cloud may not have quite the fastest 3D ever, but it's certainly the most atmospheric. There's a real feeling of flying around a city - albeit a very sparsely populated one - and the dogfights through narrow streets and around towering skyscrapers are superbly exciting. Sound, although not special, is adequate (the theme tune sounds just like Total Recall's). This has to be the best vector game I've seen in a long while and I, for one, won't rest until the Black Angel scum is either behind bars or six feet under.

But remember, be careful out there.

RELEASE DETAILS

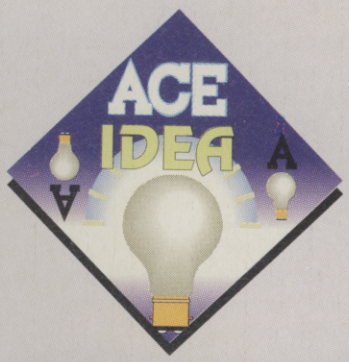
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£24.99	June

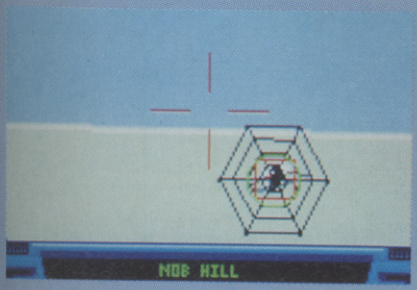
No other versions planned

A NOVEL APPROACH

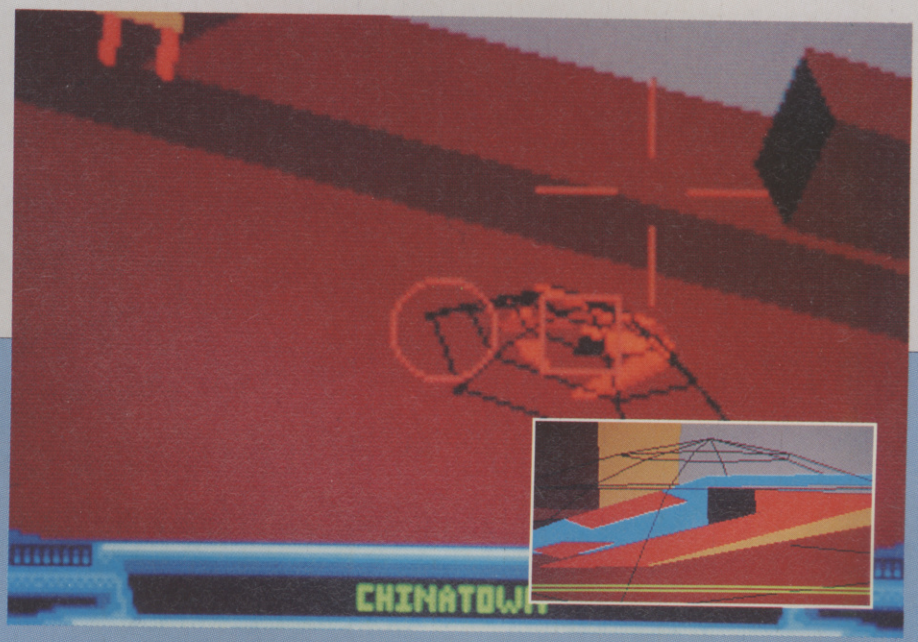
Part of the reason for *The Killing Cloud's* success may be that Vektor Grafix commissioned Alistair Swinnerton, a professional writer, to produce a 16-page novella before work on the game even began. Vektor knew they wanted to do a game based in some sort of beleaguered city, but left the precise scenario up to Alistair. When Alistair had finished, Vektor began translating his world into a game.

The novella, plus a 26-page comic strip, are all included in the final boxed product.



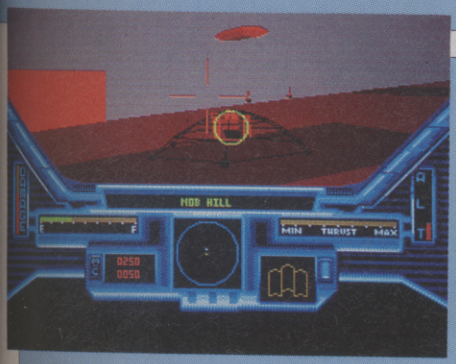


...Gotcha! The net missile makes contact and folds around the hoverbike, forcing an emergency landing...

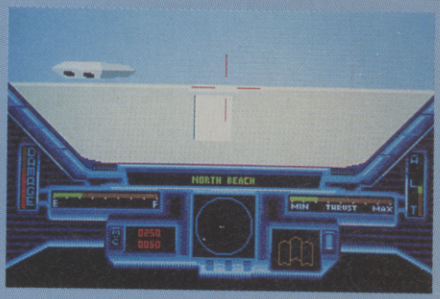


...Back below Cloud level, you locate the downed perp and land...

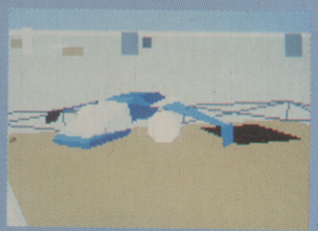
...Donning protective suit, you open the XB500's hatch and walk towards the perp's bike (there's a nice bobbing motion as you do this). Now, read him his rights and summon the nearest Pup...



...The Pup, like any good dog, comes running at once it hears its master's voice and swoops down over the netted catch to pick it up...



...Perp safely in the Pup's belly, the good doggy makes its way back to the Station House. You'd do best to chaperone it, in case the Angels try to pull the Pup off course...



...At last! The Pups back home, so are you, and the perp's in the cells. (This, by the way, is an out-of-cockpit shot.) But your mission's not over yet...

...Interrogation time. Any old lag knows his rights, and will always have his lawyer in tow during questioning. Barter for information, but don't be too lenient.

ground. Unfortunately, it's all too easy to miss, and the maximum payload of three nets may not be enough to bring down some criminals' bikes, which is why back-up nets have to be placed on the streets before a mission. Flying low and slow over one on the ground causes it to automatically fly up and attach itself to the 'bike.

Having bagged your man, all you've got to do is land next to him, read him his rights and summon a mobile holding pen, or Pup, to take the perp back to the Station. The reason for the Pups is simple - the XB500s can only carry one person, and he's sitting in the cockpit. And be careful to land the perp near to the Pup's pre-set waiting point, or it'll be out of range of your radio summons.

Now's the time to take a rare breather, while you watch the Pup fly over, pick up the perp and start the return journey to the Station House. Wise cops know it's best to keep a close eye on a Pup - gangs have been known to use false signals to detour them or even send up 'bikes to kill captured perps who know too much.

Once back at the station you sentence the perp to a long stretch, then take them into the Interrogation Room for questioning. You can choose from a list of questions to ask your subject. If they're unresponsive you can try taking some years off their sentence in return for hard information. Take off too many years and ☞

☞ you'll be forced to let the criminal go. Fail to get a lead to the next mission or let the prisoner off and you'll be out of a job.

BOOK 'EM, DANNO

The Killing Cloud is Vektor Grafix's latest 3D venture, and they don't disappoint. Admittedly, the polygon graphics aren't quite the fastest I've ever seen, but they're more than fast enough, and the ability to set detail level means it's up to you whether you'd rather sight-see or get on with the job in hand.

The Cloud splits of the 'game world' into two halves. Above the cloud the skies are clear and blue, with only the spires of the city's tallest buildings piercing the murk below. But below the Cloud it's literally a different world altogether, a claustrophobic maze of dead buildings where the dense smog permits only limited visibility.

Objects don't fade away in the fog, like in *Midwinter*, but appear when they get within a certain range. Being realistic, a *Midwinter* effect would've slowed the graphics down unacceptably. Anyway, it's adds a certain thrill to play when you're flying at max speed in pursuit of a perp and a giant slab of building suddenly slides into view...

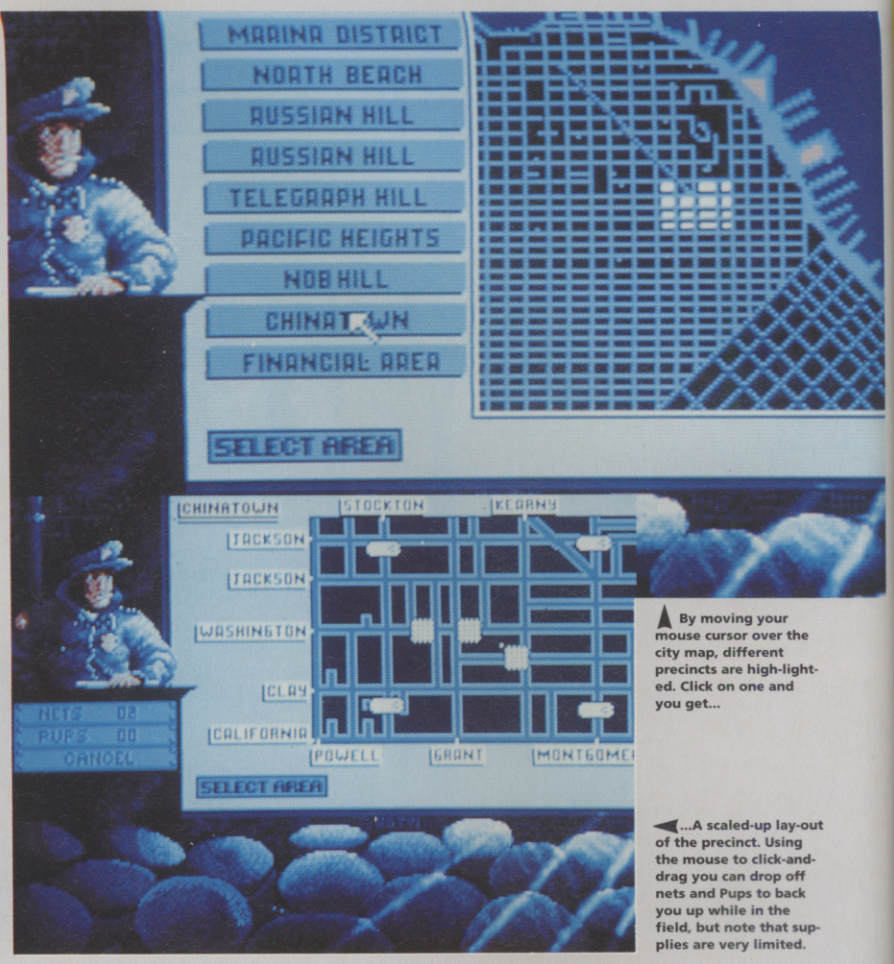
Every day starts here, in the Station House Briefing Room. By clicking on the five boxes below the Sarge you can find out mission details, call up a city map, enter the armoury, look through the crime file, or call up holo-images of the vehicles and buildings you'll see on your mission.

Vektor Grafix have obviously taken great pains to ensure ease of play. All selections on the mission set-up screens are controlled by mouse clicks. The XB500 is a joy to fly, responsive but not overly so. The mouse is again used to control flight and fire the XB500's weapons, with a small cluster of easily-accessible keys governing such things as velocity and weapon arming. If I've any complaint about the control (a minor one), it's that the keys are a little too closely bunched, and it's all to easy to arm a weapon when you intended to decrease your speed.

Where Vektor Grafix have really triumphed, and this is the reason they've won themselves a Trailblazer, is in generating atmosphere, all too often lacking in games, particularly polygon games. The grim Station House graphics (marred only by a duff launch sequence) convey a genuine feeling of a grimy battle-scarred police force at its lowest ebb, and the tense claustrophobia of the high-speed street-level fighting is incredible. The ten missions are diverse, and the plot thread running through them lends a feeling of consequence to your efforts - you're not just flying for kicks.

The Killing Cloud is highly recommended. Go grab yourself a slice of the action.

● David Upchurch

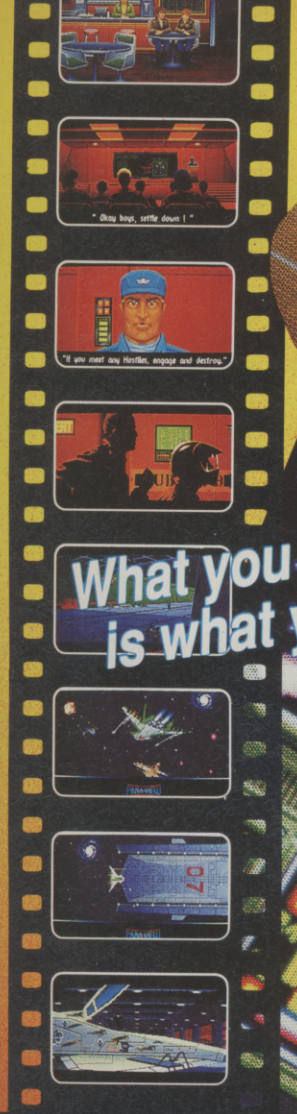


By moving your mouse cursor over the city map, different precincts are high-lighted. Click on one and you get...

...A scaled-up lay-out of the precinct. Using the mouse to click-and-drag you can drop off nets and Pups to back you up while in the field, but note that supplies are very limited.

In the crime file you can get detailed information on the suspects. It's always a wise move to look through here before going out on a mission just in case there's a little fact that might help in your hunt.

The armoury takes the form of a dispensing machine. Don't get too excited: your XB500 only packs a machine gun and a cannon, and the big decision is how many rounds of each weapon's ammo to carry. Also on offer are extra fuel and a protective suit (very handy for any extra-vehicular activity).



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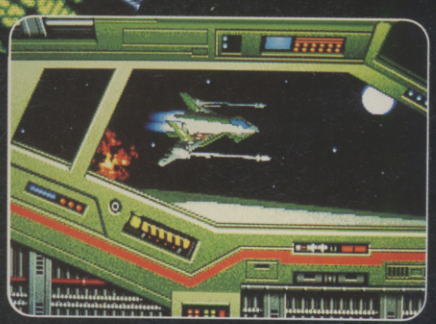

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BLADES 'N' BLASTS

THUNDERHAWK

Happy Birthday CORE DESIGN - you're one-year old! ACE helps itself to a slice of cake, plays 'Pass-the-Parcel' and then takes an early look at two of their forthcoming games

The 16-bit games market is bursting at its metaphorical seams with flight simulators. But if the cumbersomely-titled *AH-73M Thunderhawk* (the 'AH' standing for 'Attack Helicopter') maintains the promise of the early version I saw, then it should easily blow its competitors away.

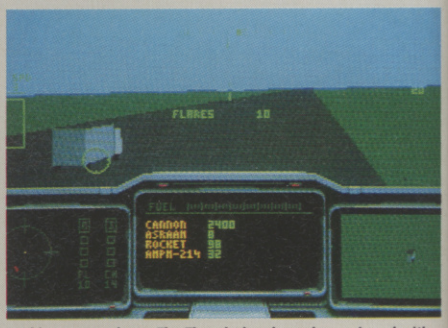
The men-of-mystery responsible for the in-house programming are 'Mac' (ST and Amiga) and 'Gilbert' (PC), while the less-enigmatic but far-more-sensible Simon Phipps is contributing ideas and front-end graphics. Mac did all the groundwork and wrote the basics of the 3D routines on-and-off over a period of two years. But incredibly the screen shots you see here are the result of just six weeks work.

The Thunderhawk is, as military buffs will already have realised, fictitious. But the copter's design and performance are closely modelled on extrapolations of current work by aeronautical engineers. Mac and Gilbert have spent a lot of time making sure the 'copter has the right 'feel', but they admit that a rigorously-accurate simulator was never their intention. "We definitely wanted the accent to be be on action," explains Simon, "I can't stand games where you have to fly 500 miles to destroy just one target then fly 500 miles back again. With this game you'll be in the thick of it within ten seconds of taking off. I guess you could call it a 'shoot-everything sim'!"

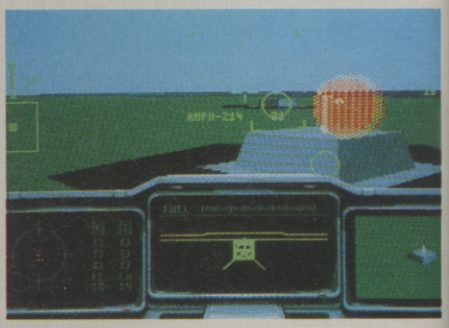
I took the chopper for a flight on the Amiga, past ground installations, missile silos and mountains. The speed and fluidity of the 3D images is superior to anything I've seen. Just how fast are they? Mac thinks for a second then replies, "Well, it obviously depends on the number of objects on-screen, but often the program is capable of updating the 3D view every fiftieth of a second."

Gilbert adds, "We've put in a check to make sure that the screen never updates faster than seventeen times a second. We'd get so used to the fast update that we'd get annoyed by the program slowing down when we got lots on-screen, though it was still exceptionally fast compared to other people's programs." As Mac points out, "It got a little embarrassing having a 3D polygon game running faster than many sprite-based shoot-'em-ups!" After a bit of debating Mac and Gilbert settle on an average figure of around twelve updates a second.

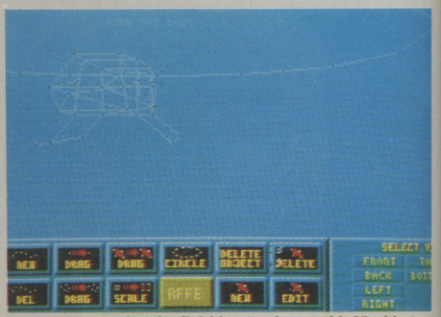
But how did Mac manage to get his routine so fast? "Well, obviously I'm not going to give the whole game away," he replies, "But part of the reason is that the program only processes those areas of the map within viewing range of the pilot and ignores the rest. The map can be as big as you want it, but the routine will never slow down."



Locking on to a lorry. The Thunderhawk can be equipped with a wide range of weaponry selected from the base's armoury at the start of the mission.



That same hornet's nest of missile bases as viewed from the Thunderhawk's cockpit. Mac and Gilbert are developing a mouse control system that will will allow you to access all the major 'copter functions and relegate key pressing to less-essential game controls, such as out-of-cockpit view, save/load game, etc.



Mac was just putting the finishing touches on this 3D-object designer at the time of visiting. Using the panel of icons at the bottom of the screen it's simplicity itself to draw points, join them up and generate polygons. The Thunderhawk, shown here in wireframe, is made up of 49 polygons.

THE CORE SCORE

It was only last April that Core Design switched from being a development house to a software publisher in their own right. They were responsible for hits such as *Rick Dangerous 1 & 2* for the Microstyle label and *Impossamole* for Gremlin Graphics, but their first independent title, the ACE-Rated *Corporation*, proved that Core were capable of producing far more than platform games. *Corporation* was followed by the *Rastan-Saga*-like *Torvak the Warrior* and the amusing *Car-Vup*. Their most recent game, the excellent *Chuck Rock*, is given the ACE review treatment on page 73.

If the program's this fast on the Amiga, it should be blistering on the PC. "Well, yes," replies Gilbert, "But there are a few problems. Mac's doing all his maths in 32-bits, which is fine on the ST and Amiga because the 68000 CPU has 32-bit registers. Unfortunately the PC's CPU is 16-bit, which means the computations have to be done in two parts. So the game will run a little slower than the ST and Amiga on an 8-MHz PC."

Mac and Gilbert realise that there's no time to rest on their laurels yet - there's still plenty of work to be done if the game is going to hit its anticipated August release date. For a start, no actual missions have been designed or implemented yet - so far they've been concentrating on getting the basic routines up and running.

But probably the man with the biggest task ahead of him is Simon who, inspired by the movie-like between-mission screens in Origin's *Wing Commander*, hopes to incorporate lots of similarly atmospheric sequences in *Tomahawk*. So far he's been spending his time working on lots of storyboards - the hard part of putting them onto computer is yet to come.

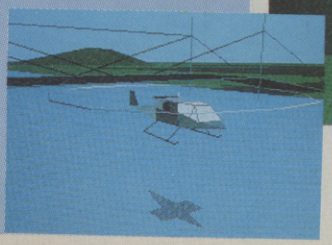
It's hard not to get very excited about *Thunderhawk*. If the team can add depth of gameplay whilst maintaining the speed of the current program then Core will easily have the best flight-sim on the market. Naturally we will keep you fully informed of further developments. So keep watching the skies and reading ACE - *Thunderhawk* is coming.

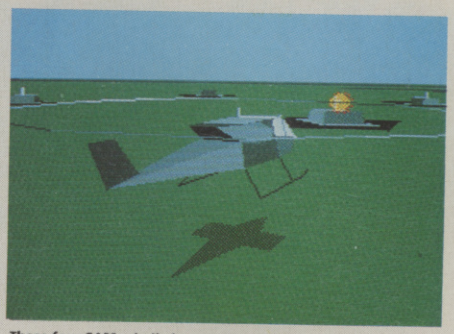
● **David Upchurch**

THE WORLD AT WAR

Your task is simple: use your unparalleled piloting skills to help win the war for 'Our Side'. Like Ocean's *Battle Command*, the game is broken down into missions... sixty of them! Those blanching at the thought will be relieved to learn that they're split into six ten-mission campaigns, each set in a different part of the war-torn world. The graphics and missions will reflect the current campaign location; in the Antarctic you'll be flying over ice-floes and icebergs while tackling subs, for example.

Each mission in a given campaign can be tackled in whatever order you fancy and your success will have knock-on effect in the subsequent missions: if you first take out a radar station, then the enemy will find it harder to locate you later on. Each mission takes 6 game-hours, and a maximum of four can be tackled a day. However, you've got to take time out for rest or your performance will suffer. But there's more at stake than personal glory: your success in each campaign will affect the outcome of the global conflict.





These four SAM-missile bases will quickly reduce your 'copter to a pile of scrap unless you act swiftly. Mac and Gilbert have paid a lot of attention to detail: for example, the bases don't just fire a stream of missiles at you - having fired one, there's a pause while another is loaded, then you see the engines fire up (you can see the orange glow of the jets here), then the missile is launched.

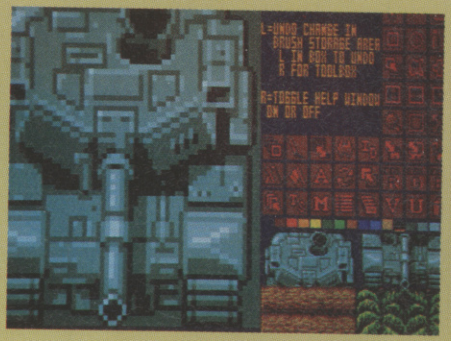
At last! Flares are back in! As any Madchester raver will be aware they're an essential fashion accessory in these days of increased heat-seeking missile availability.

WARZONE

Due for imminent release is *Warzone*, a vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up pitching one man (you, of course) against eight levels of screaming gun-toting hordes, each level being a massive thirty screens long and packed with enough finger-twitching action to keep even the toughest hombre happy.

John Kirkland is in charge of programming on the ST and Amiga with Terry Lloyd providing the graphics. "We're great fans of the *Commando* and *Ikari Warriors* style of game," says John, explaining the reasoning behind writing a game in a genre that some would consider a little... er... passé, "But we felt that there had never been a proper home computer version yet."

Apart from the pop gun you start off with there are six others to collect, each with three different power levels.



One of Terry's end-of-level baddys - a giant tank (not that you'd ever guess). These giants are built up from a number of individual 32 x 32 pixel sprites.

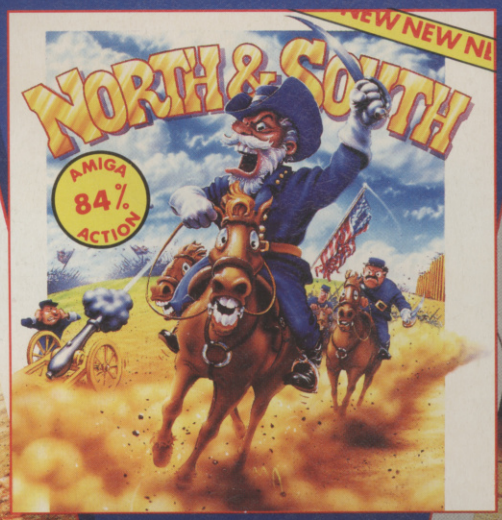
These early demo screens are just to give you an idea of the sort of graphics you can expect in the final game. Be warned that the action will be very tough!

Work started on the game in mid-December and John's been writing the game in modules - like any good programmer should! - and making sure each one is fully debugged before moving on to the next. The backgrounds (32 colour on Amiga and 16 on ST) scroll at a smooth twenty-five frames per second and use the full UK-standard PAL screen - not the squashed-looking US NTSC screen so often seen.

The screens shown here are look pretty sparsely populated because these are test levels to make sure all the different routines work together. The final versions will be able to handle up to thirty large sprites - for soldiers, hostages, gun turrests, etc - plus twenty bullet sprites.

John hoped to be able to include a two-player option as standard, with each player having different coloured trousers, but due to memory restrictions this may have to be made available to one megabyte memory machines only. Core hope to release the game around May, so look for the full ACE review soon.

Come on, fellas, cheer up! Proving war is hell are programmer John Kirkland (left) and graphic artist Terry Lloyd (right).



Action SIXTEEN

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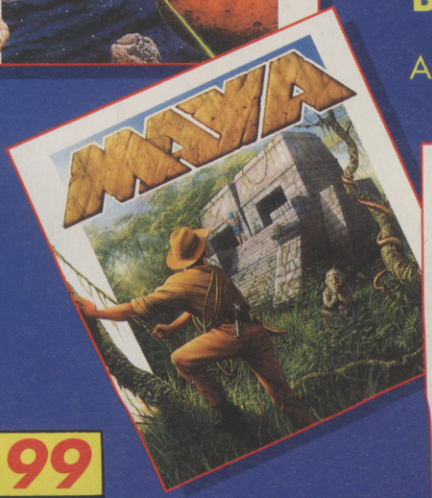

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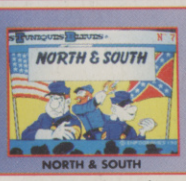

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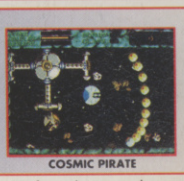
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Kult	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hostages	☐	☐	☐	☐
S.D.I.	☐	☐	☐	N/A
Rotor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Colorado	☐	☐	☐	☐
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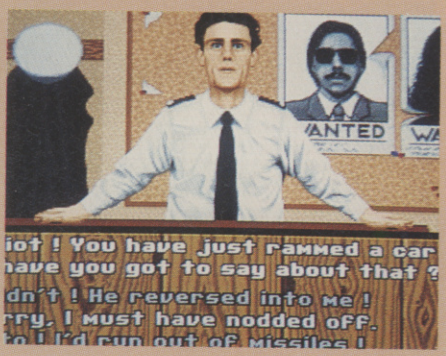
In one-player mode there's the luxury of a full-screen scrolling road.



And what does cash mean? Power ups, of course! A quick between-race trip to your friendly neighbourhood speed merchant is in order.

SUPERCARS II

Souped up racing, as Gremlin and Magnetic Fields get together for another in the long line of sequels...

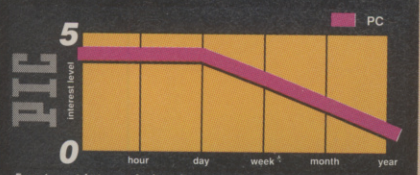
Ever since Shaun Southern hammered away at his trusty 64 to bring us *Kikstart*, Magnetic Fields have been a name associated with quality race games. Since then, they have been responsible for the likes of *Super Scramble Simulator*, *Kikstart II*, and, more recently, *Supercars* and *Lotus* for Gremlin. And now, after a break of four months, they return to the racing genre with the follow up to the ever-popular *Supercars*. Retaining the basic aim of the original - i.e. tear around a predetermined number of tracks, ensuring that you are one of the first past the line, scooping massive cash rewards in the process - Southern and Co. have smoothed off the original's rough edges and have added a number of features that they had leave out due to memory restrictions - the most notable being a split-screen two-player mode which allows two people to compete against each other.

In all, *Supercars II* spans some 21 different circuits, which are split up into groups of seven. However, whereas the tracks of the original were bland,two-dimensional affairs with the odd oil or water hazard to slow the player down, the sequel features all manner of obstacles and problems, ranging from collapsed bridges to tunnels and larger oil hazards. In addition, a number of weather conditions have been added to spice things up a little, so the original's acute corners are now made even harder with the addition of heavy snowfalls and rocky outcrops. In keeping with these new additions, the graphics have been vastly improved, too. Each of the cars is animated using over 250 frames, and this attention to detail is particularly effective when the car is leaping over massive gaps or rising up the side of a banked curve.

Also retained from the first game is the accessory shop, where the potential boy racers, and race winners with a freshly-acquired wad of cash, can fine-tune their car's performance with all manner of faster engines, turbo boosters and extra-gripping tyres. Similarly, this section has also been expanded to incorporate a wider supply of weaponry than its predecessor, and these now include mines, missiles that circle the player's car, and the rear and front-mounted missiles of the original. Despite the addition of the enhanced shop and a new interview sequence where players can earn or lose cash by talking to the press or the police, *Supercars II* is a tribute to the original's playability and ease of use. The control system of the original remains exactly the same, ensuring that fans of the original will feel right at home, and the new additions, whilst adding immeasurably to the playability of the game, don't get in the way of the all-important gameplay. Despite offering nothing new in terms of gameplay, *Supercars II* is a welcome addition to the crowded genre, and is an addictive - if untaxing - little racer.

● **Steve Merrett**

Round and round they go, where they stop nobody knows. The two-player option in action - the split-screen can mean you don't have quite as much room to see ahead



Easy to get into and play, but tough to beat. *Supercars II* is great fun - for a while, anyway.

ACE RATING **812**

6 6 6 9
G IQ A FF

IBM PC

Easy to get into, with a good variety of tracks and hazards, *Supercars II* is way ahead of the competition. Whilst it can't honestly compete with the likes of Gremlin's superb *Lotus* (and who'd expect it to?), it offers simple playability and a relatively long-term task. There are enough courses to keepo even the most skilled driver busy, but its repetitive nature means that you may stop playing before you can be bothered to complete them all.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ST	£24.99	IMMINENT

The nature of the intro screens makes it clear that your task is not one to be taken lightly. The quality of these graphics is maintained throughout the game, in a high-definition rendering of the *Dungeon Master* style.

Eye of the Beholder

Is this graphical RPG from US GOLD the best-ever *Dungeons-and-Dragons* computer role-playing game? Sit back, relax and quaff deeply of your mead as ACE journeys underground...

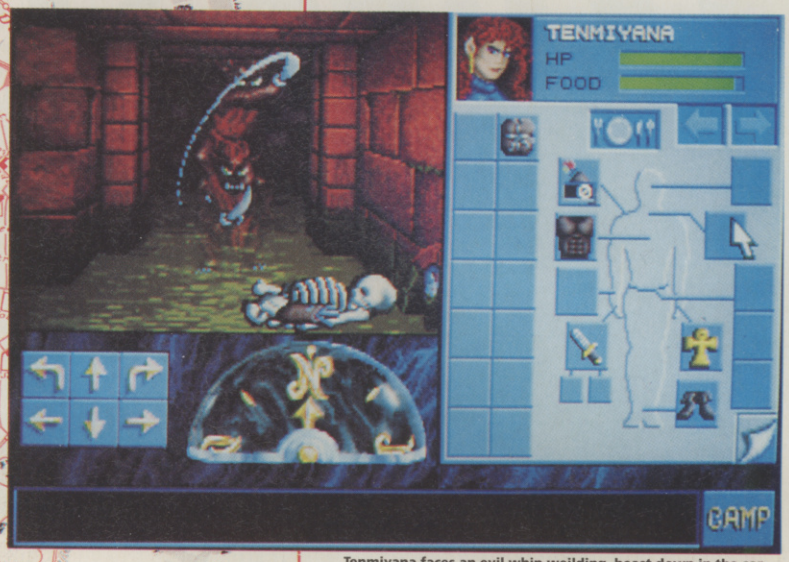
Advanced Dungeons-and-Dragons role-playing games have traditionally ignored sophisticated graphics and animation in favour of complex play systems and detailed scenarios. But the popularity of titles like *Dungeon Master* shows that even RPG fanatics like to see pretty pictures while they slay the goblins, so *Eye of the Beholder* goes very heavily in that direction.

There's very little in the game which is significantly different to *Dungeon Master*; you have a party of four characters fighting and thinking their way through a maze-like series of dungeons, depicted in 3-D eyeview with an icon-based object handling system. It has to be said that the backgrounds, animated characters and object handling displays are uniformly good, some of the monsters like the giant spider and axe-weilding skeletons being particularly scarey.

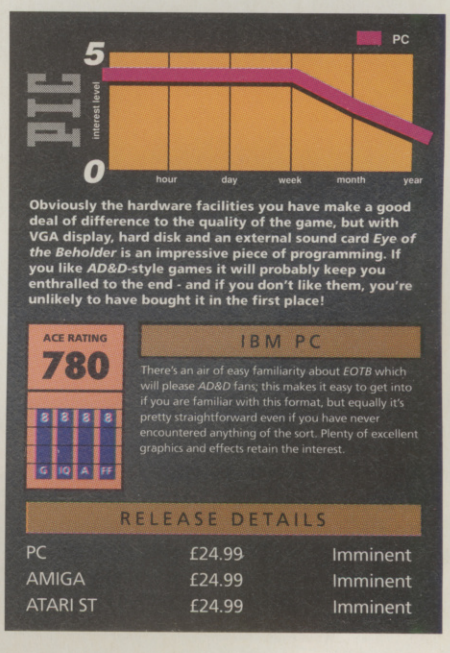
After backing up the five 5.25-inch PC disks, or transferring the program to hard disk, you have a wide range of options for display mode, sound system and control device. For the best gameplay you should have a hard disk, VGA display, mouse and external sound board - then you're really kicking.

First off you have to define and name your characters, choosing their race, sex, physical appearance, mystical alignment, and features such as strength, intelligence, dexterity, charisma and armour class.

Once into the game you find yourself trapped in the sewers of Waterdeep, seeking out a conspiracy led by the sinister Xanathar. The main display features an eye-view of the surroundings, a series of arrow icons which allow you to change your orientation and movement, a text window which gives you information on the objects and creatures you encounter, a compass display, and windows showing the face of each character and the objects he or she is carrying. The key to controlling the game is to understand the Take, Use and Select functions; most conveniently controlled by the mouse, these allow you to pass weapons, food, spell books, keys and other objects from one character to another. The health, possessions and capabilities of each



Tenmiyana faces an evil whip-weilding beast down in the corridor. (Above) You can examine the attributes of the players to investigate whether or not they are capable of fighting.



Obviously the hardware facilities you have make a good deal of difference to the quality of the game, but with VGA display, hard disk and an external sound card *Eye of the Beholder* is an impressive piece of programming. If you like *AD&D*-style games it will probably keep you enthralled to the end - and if you don't like them, you're unlikely to have bought it in the first place!

ACE RATING
780

IBM PC

There's an air of easy familiarity about *EOTB* which will please *AD&D* fans; this makes it easy to get into if you are familiar with this format, but equally it's pretty straightforward even if you have never encountered anything of the sort. Plenty of excellent graphics and effects retain the interest.

G IQ A FF

RELEASE DETAILS

PC	£24.99	Imminent
AMIGA	£24.99	Imminent
ATARI ST	£24.99	Imminent

You can't go that way! You certainly can't, unless you're prepared to tangle with the deadly tentacle of Teeth! (Left)
A successful mission is entirely reliant on the correct choice of members of your party. Selecting an unbalanced team, whether heavy on the fighting or the magic will result in little success. (Below)

can be checked by clicking on their portrait, bringing up a detailed window; and objects can be picked up, dropped and used by clicking on them with the left or right mouse button.

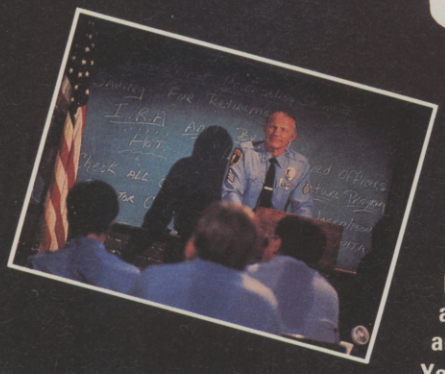
Most doors can be opened simply by finding their control levers and clicking on them, but some require lock-picking skills or magical spells to open them. Obviously the most exciting parts of the game come as you encounter hostile denizens of the sewers, and you must move quickly to place your strongest fighters in position, strike at the attackers with weapons or spells, and if necessary to run like hell.

The package comes with a map to help you navigate, a quick-play datacard and a thick rulebook covering all the available spells, the monsters you will encounter and the available actions. Many of these are selected from a menu on the Camp Screen, where you can rest and heal your party, take the time to memorize spells from your grimoire, change game preferences such as sound effects and control device, and save or load stored games.

Eye of the Beholder adds little or nothing to titles such as *Dungeon Master*, but it's impossible to criticise it in any other way; graphics, sound, gameplay and packaging are all fine. It should provide hours of entertainment for RPG fans, and if you get stuck you can always send off for a clue book to help you out.

●Chris Jenkins

HILL STREET BLUES



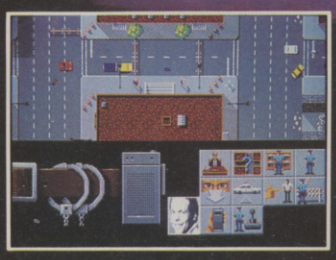
Hill Street Blues "The most honoured series in the history of television", World wide it has achieved 59 awards that include 26 Emmy's.

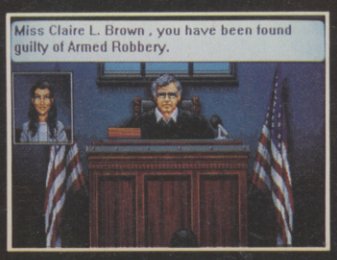
Krisalis have created a computer controlled city which generates an environment displaying 300 vehicles and 400 people who live and work within the Hill Street Precinct for you to interact with.

You take on the role of Captain Furillo and by deploying the Police Officers under your control, you solve and control the crime rate, which the computer generates.

The game features nine of the most famous characters from the series using these Police Officers, you can interact with up to nine cr incidents simultaneously, ranging from Muggers to Bank Robbery, Drug Pushers to Murderers. So "Remember, lets be careful out the

AM ATAR IBM PC COMPATI 24.9





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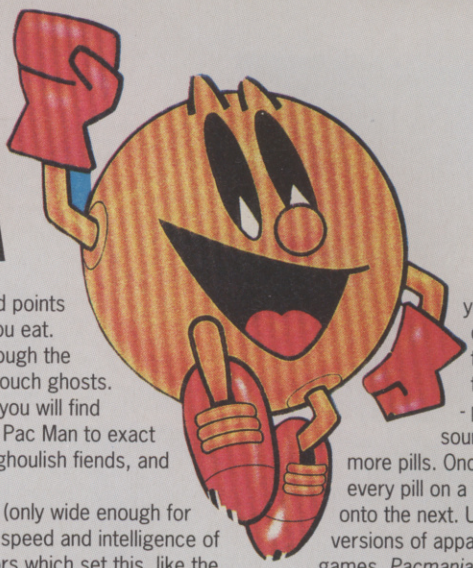
PACMANIA



Good news for Master System owners! *Pac Man* returns in 3D and *Populous* is on the way thanks to TECMAGIK

Everyone's favourite yellow eating machine, *Pac Man* returns to top form in thie excellent conversion of the coin-op. *Pacmania* is a perfectly simple concept, virtually identical to the original munching game with the extra enjoyment and visual appeal offered by the 3D graphics.

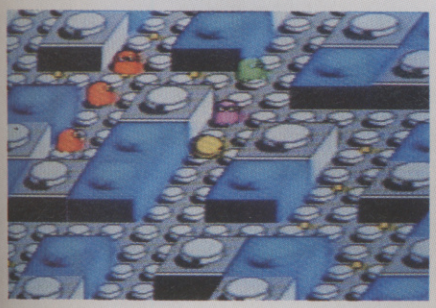
The premise of the game is amazingly simple. You must race around a number of worlds, Block Town, Pac-Man park, Sandbox and Jungly Steps, clearing them of little pills. The pills line every corridor of every world, and points are awarded for each you eat.

Pursuing *PacMan* through the maze are deadly-to-the-touch ghosts. At certain intersections you will find Power Pills, which allow Pac Man to exact terrible revenge on the ghoulish fiends, and eat them too!

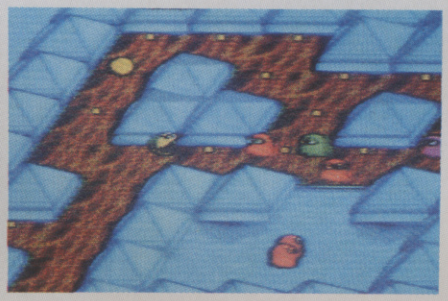
The narrow corridors (only wide enough for one character), and the speed and intelligence of the ghosts are the factors which set this, like the other games in the series, apart from most other you'll find on your machine.

The Master System version is virtually identical to the original, with super-smooth scrolling and flawless motion. As you hurtle around the corridors, the ghosts all gang up and try to ambush you. Using the Jump command, it's possible to fling Pac Man into the air, avoiding ghosts - providing your timing is sound - and scooping even more pills. Once you've gobbled every pill on a level, you will move onto the next. Unlike many other conversions of apparently 'easy' arcade games, *Pacmania* doesn't fall into the trap of trying to tweak or change any elements which may upset the balance and remove that tricky-to-define quality which made it such a hit in the first place. It's as direct a conversion as anyone could hope for. Excellent.

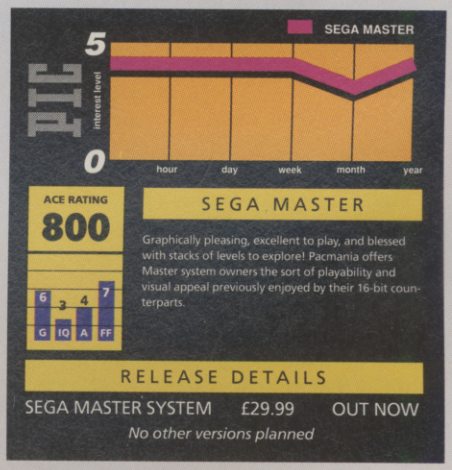
● Jim Douglas



Mr and Mrs Ghost seem to have been a bit busy since the last time Pac Man made his pill-popping rounds. Surely there only used to be *four* ghosts? As you can see, the graphics are very close to the arcade original.



Pac Man is going to have to make some pretty neat moves to avoid those two ghost in a row that he's very rapidly heading towards. Perhaps he ought to do a U-turn and make for the ghost-bustin' Power Pill at the top-left?



POPULOUS

Populous, the monster of strategy is gradually working it's way onto the Master system. Due for release in early April, the conversion of the game which has swept Europe, scooping 22 awards from all manner of top mags is looking good, and those computer owners who maintained that "you'll never see a game of this sort on a console" will have to think again!

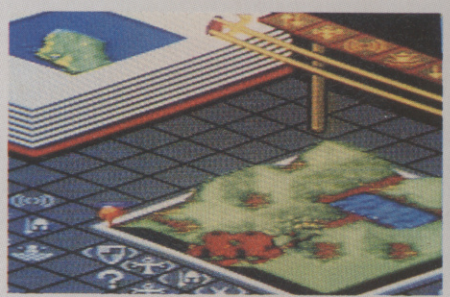
The game offers players the chance to become Ruler of the Universe; an appealing job description if ever there was one. The game features special adaptations of the original's control method, and TecMagik, the company behind the conversion, are confident that it'll be equally addictive.

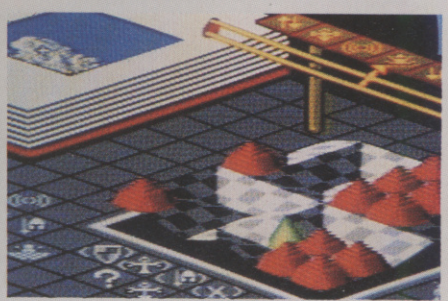
There are 5,000 different worlds to conquer, each with climate, landscape and population peculiarities, making it distinct from the rest.

You can create new lands for your followers to develop, unleash natural disasters like Volcanos and Hurricanes and even instruct them to begin the final battle of Armageddon!

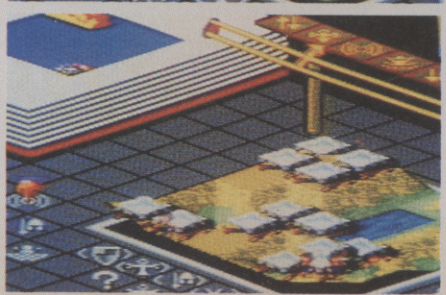
Work should be completed by the end of March.

● Jim Douglas

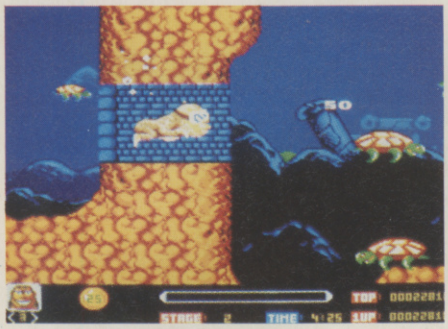




Those familiar with the 16-bit *Populous* may remember that a *Promised Lands* data disc containing new landscape designs was released a few months after the original game. It appears that lucky Master System owners will get these extras as standard.



Apart from the graphics looking slightly coarser, you'd be hard pushed to tell the difference between the Master System incarnation of *Populous* and Bullfrog's 16-bit original. But can Tecmagik port across the gameplay? Only time will tell, but advance reports are very good...



◀ During the underwater stages, Toki automatically dons a pair of goggles and starts to swim. The action then takes more of a shoot' em up slant, although our hero is marginally less controllable.

Holding the firebutton ▶ down in conjunction with the joystick allows the player to fire Toki's spit in any direction, which is particularly useful for killing the creatures that appear directly above him.

TOKI

Arcade action as OCEAN get down to some serious monkey business...

For some reason, the *Toki* coin-op never really took off as well as it should have. It's basic gameplay doesn't offer anything particularly new, but the actual game area is large and varied and its six stages offer a number of interesting game ideas within its relatively limited style. Ocean France's conversion retains all of the coin-op's features, including the original's colourful graphics, and the Amiga version of *Toki* is as close a conversion as you could possibly expect.

The odd scenario tells of how Toki, whilst out with his betrothed one day, was set upon by the evil wizard, Vookimedlo, who kidnapped his girly and whisked her away to his Golden Palace on the other side of the kingdom. But - adding insult to already considerable injury - he also cast a spell on our hero, transforming him into an ape. Thus, arms dragging along the ground, the indignant primate decided to avenge himself and eventually rescue his beloved from the clutches of the wizard.

Toki's journey spans six multi-directional-scrolling stages which are made up of assorted landscapes. Starting in a series of caves, Toki can be made to run, jump and crawl via the joystick's directional controls, whilst pressing fire prompts the ape to repel any attacking nasties with a mouthful of spit, which can be made to fire in virtually any direction.

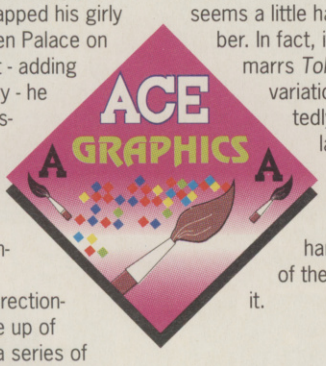
Each level is patrolled by a wide range of enemy sprites who, not content with killing Toki simply by touching him, also materialise directly above him or come fully prepared with mortar launchers and energy beams. On killing certain species of these, bonus icons are left for the taking and equip Toki with upgraded capabilities, including the ability to breathe fire and scatter his phlegm over a wider range. In addition, temporary protection can collected in the shape of a crash helmet to protect the simian from enemy attack.

Moving on from the cave system, Toki battles through massive shark-infested lakes (where Toki swims through the watery caverns, suitably equipped with a pair of goggles), ice worlds, and the fiery caverns of hell, before eventually making it to Vookimedlo's golden palace. Each level boasts nasties who tie in with each level's graphical theme, with Toki-squashing portcullis in the palace and evil puffer fish in the second stage's underwater section.

All of this eventually leads up to a confrontation with the level's guardian who, in true guardian tradition, must be shot/spat at until he finally gives up the ghost. This, however, is easier said than done, and some of the end-of-level guardians require both perfect timing and pixel-perfect positioning before they are beaten.

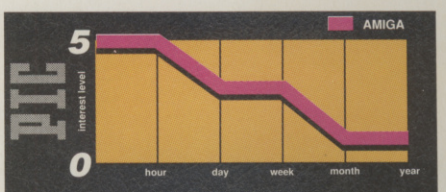
As coin-op conversions go, *Toki* is one of the better ones. The graphics are identical to those of the coin-op, as is the sound, but the gameplay seems a little harder than I seem to remember. In fact, it is the overt difficulty that marrs *Toki*'s playability. The lack of variation between levels is admittedly kept to minimum, but the lack of progress can be very frustrating and even off-putting. Still, *Toki* is a fine conversion and while it's hardly award-winning stuff, fans of the coin-op should go ape over it.

● Steve Merrett



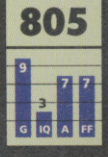
The end-of-level guardians are extremely hard to kill, and require a number of direct hits before they eventually keel over.

Collecting certain icons endows Toki with a number of enhanced features. These include fiery breath, three-way-fire and a crash helmet. In addition, bonus-giving coins can be collected by killing the swarms of creatures who fly around.



Just like having the arcade machine in your home! But surely the arcade game wasn't this tough? Soon - depending on your gaming skills - you'll have either broken the game's back or it'll have broken yours.

ACE RATING
805



AMIGA

Fans of the coin-op should be more than pleased with this conversion, although its appeal may be limited to that loyal band. The gameplay's slightly too repetitive so interest may wane after a while, and the difficulty level is set rather too high. In addition, the gameplay is similar to that of Chuck Rock, and it has to be said that Chuck is slightly more playable and accessible...

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.95	OUT NOW

No other versions planned

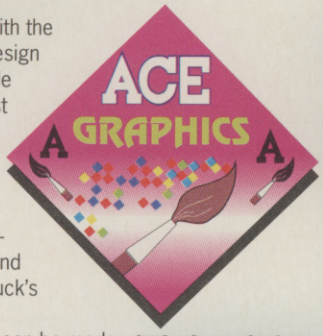
MONKEYING AROUND

Toki **features the first starring role of an ape in a computer game, with *Donkey Kong* being the only other notable game featuring a primate of any kind. In addition, whereas Toki is an intelligent sort of chimp, Kong was a dim animal whose only purpose was to toss barrels down at a little dungaree-wearing chap called Mario (I wonder what happened to him?). With Toki now sending apes into the big league, perhaps we can expect the likes of *The Gr-Ape Escape* (a conversion of Ocean's ancient 3D-er) and *Simian City* from Infogrames.**

CHUCK ROCK

It's time to kick your feet and wobble your belly as CORE DESIGN travel to the dawn of time

Having proved their versatility with the excellent *Corporation*, Core Design return to the cutesy genre that made their name. Deriving ideas from past Core games, such as *Monty Python*, *Torvak The Warrior* and *Impossamole*, *Chuck Rock* is a massive romp through five distinct prehistoric settings split into twenty-five levels as Chuck chases arch fiend Gary Gritter who has kidnapped Chuck's wife, Ophelia.



Chuck is joystick controlled, and can be made to walk, jump and crouch with the usual combinations of the joystick controls, whilst the firebutton effects his infamous 'belly bump' - a huge swing of his beer gut - which kills anything unfortunate enough to be in range. In addition, whenever Chuck jumps he can perform a flying kick Bruce Lee would be proud of, and lives up to his name by picking up and lobbing the massive rocks which litter the play area.

Each stage scrolls in eight directions, and contains as weird an assortment of enemy sprites as you are ever likely to see. In keeping with the *Flintstone*-esque theme of the graphics, each of the 200+ individual creatures has been given its own attack pattern, and range from grinning crabs to jellyfish and small reptiles. Similarly, certain species can also help Chuck reach inaccessible areas - for instance, a snake can be unrolled to span a large gap or a crocodile used as an impromptu see-saw!

The end-of-level confrontation is against a massive dinosaur who promptly eats away at our hero's energy. Only with repeated hits can these foul creatures be killed, and success rewards the primitive with access to the next stage.

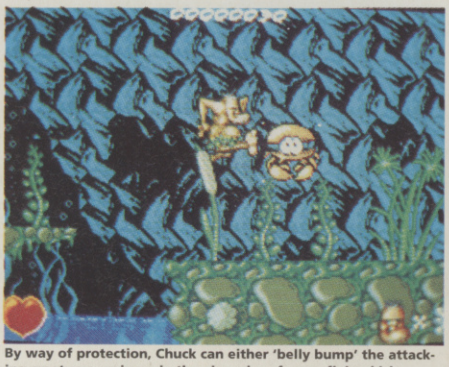
In terms of presentation, *Chuck Rock* is easily the most impressive game to appear from Core. Opening with a neat 'rock' intro, and sporting a massive range of cartoon-quality sprites, and equally impressive and varied backdrops (the water levels are particularly effective), the game is one of the most visually stunning to have appeared for ages and, perhaps surprisingly, it is backed up by some addictive gameplay.

OK, so the basic platform action offers nothing new or original, but the game plays at a rapid pace and the action never stops. What's more, even though the action doesn't vary a great deal and Chuck's task remains pretty much the same, the colourful levels ensure that boredom won't set in. In all, the best game to appear from the Derby-based company, and one of the better Amiga platform romps.

● Steve Merrett

An example of how certain creatures can prove useful. Having bumped the snake a few times, it unfolds into a handy bridge.

There are two sizes of rock that Chuck can throw, and a nice touch is that the heavier of the two impedes Chuck's progress and slows him down.



By way of protection, Chuck can either 'belly bump' the attacking creatures, or jump in the air and perform a flying kick. Accuracy is essential, but is hard due to a few few dodgy collision detection routines.

In the arctic levels, if Chuck is left alone for too long, his breath fogs up in front of him, and he starts to turn blue.

CHUCKED TOGETHER

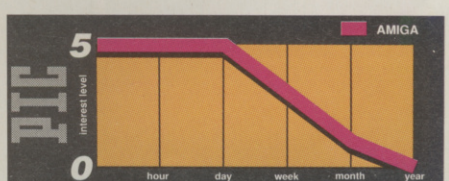
Here they are, the boys behind the bytes! From left to right they are: Lee Pullen (graphics), Chris Long (programmer) and Bob Churchill (game designer). Missing is Matthew Simmons, a freelance musician who wrote the jingles.

The team are very happy with the parallax backdrops which scroll at 50 frames a second - that's as fast as your monitor can update its screen so you can't get much better! Bob explains, "We were going to make do with a scroll updating every two frames, but Chris kept pushing for it and eventually got it under one."

Achieving such speed has its drawbacks - the parallax-scrolling routine uses the ability of the Amiga's hardware to overlay two 8-colour screens and eats up 140K of memory due to a complex triple-screen buffering method used. Chris can get up to twelve 32 x 32 pixel sprites on-screen before the program starts slipping into two frames. The program as a whole takes up just under 2MB of memory - serious compacting's needed to get the game onto two discs.

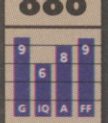
The ST version is still being finished off. Due to hardware limitations it'll be in 16 colours as opposed to the Amiga's 32 and lack the parallax scrolling, but the Amiga version's great playability should remain intact.

And after *Chuck*'s finished on the ST, what then for the dynamic trio? Blank looks all round. Richard Barclay, Core's PR man, chips in, "You're doing the Sega Megadrive conversion." Laughs Bob, "It appears we're doing the Sega Megadrive conversion." Should be good - look out for more news on that in a future issue of ACE.



The graphics lure you into Chuck's sprawling world, and the initial compulsion to crack the game is high. As you progress the addictive platform action will keep you on your toes but don't expect to be playing it in a year or so

ACE RATING **886**



AMIGA

Excellently uses the Amiga to the full, with the game quality never slipping below that of a fully-fledged arcade machine. Let your eyes and ears revel in the sheer wealth of enemy creatures, beautiful parallax backdrops, great jingles and hilarious cartoon-like sound effects. Easily the best platform romp since *Rick Dangerous II*.

RELEASE DETAILS

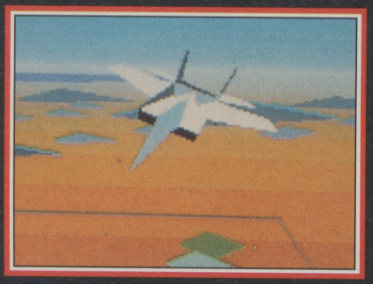
AMIGA	£24.95	Late April
ATARI ST	£24.95	Late April

No other versions planned

Four levels of difficulty will help you to learn quickly - and optional autopilot landings will allow you to concentrate on airborne action. The controls are simple, effective, and easy to remember. It is a great flight sim for beginners and experts alike.

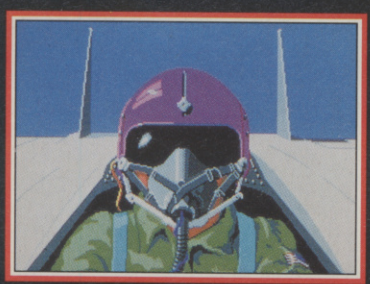
Fly missions in any of six real world arenas from the Persian Gulf to Vietnam, Central Europe to the Middle East and the North Cape to North Africa, giving you a total flying area of nearly half a million square miles.
Each area contains hundreds of missions and each mission will differ depending on your chosen tactics, even if you fly it twice!

IBM PC & Amiga screen shots

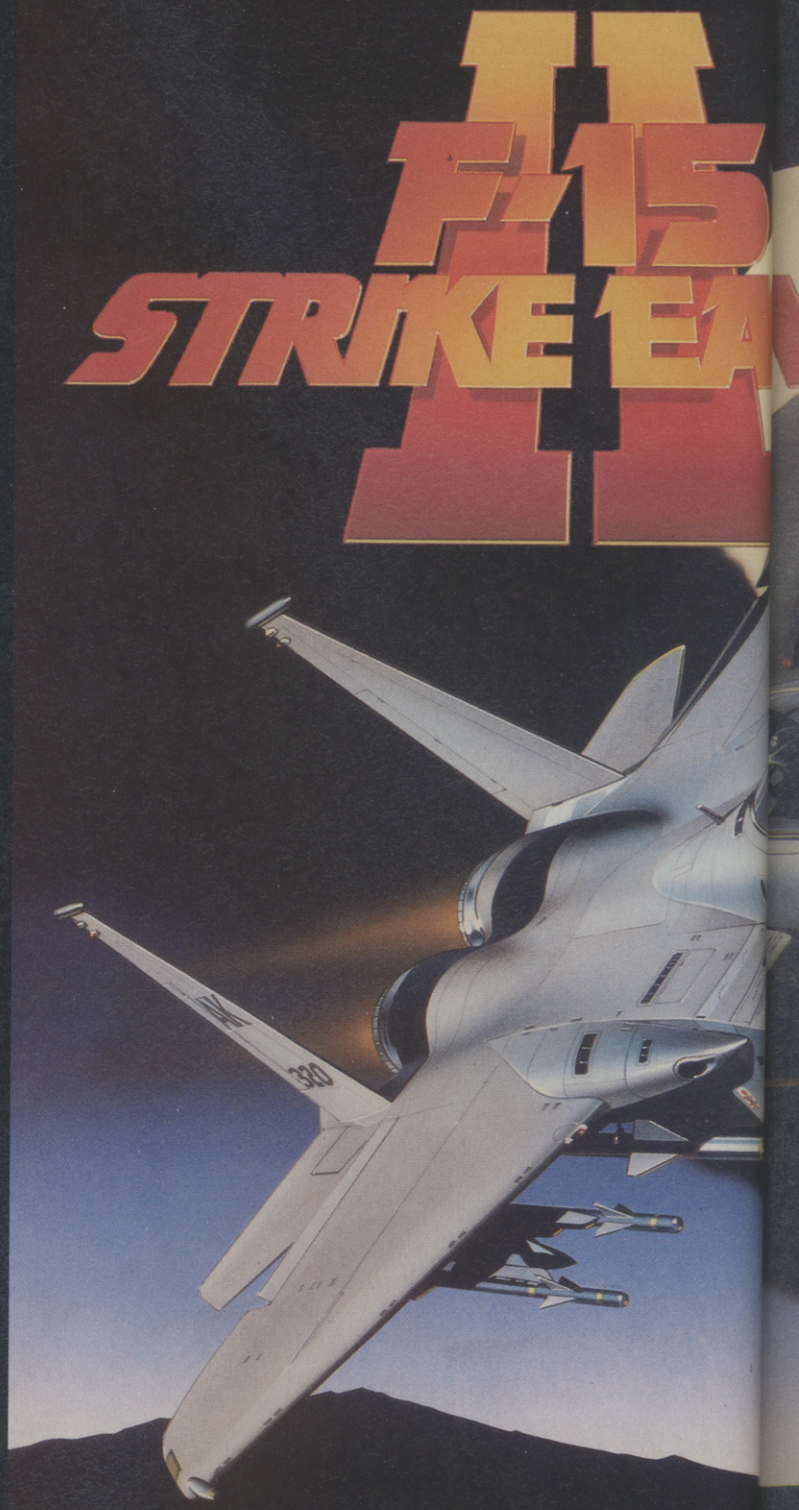


An amazing ten viewpoints give you the opportunity to view the fast flowing 3-D environment from virtually anywhere around your plane - and a unique "Director" option can be used to automatically change the view for you, so that you're always looking right at the centre of the action.

The newest smart weaponry and laser-guided armaments are primed for launch - it's your job to make sure that you're in the right place at the right time, and avoiding the constant enemy attack being thrown at you.



Enemy pilots and missile crews act and react intelligently and quickly. Success depends on making the right moves - and making them fast. F15 Strike Eagle II puts you in the hottest seat of them all - Take a look for yourself.



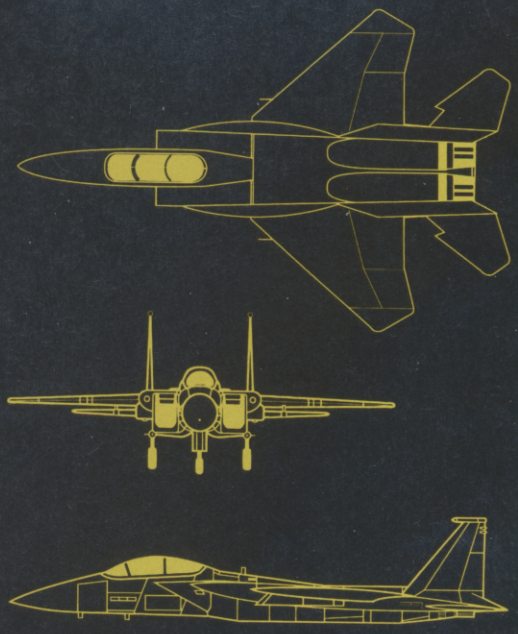
F15 Strike Eagle II follows F19 and Gunship into the front line. The latest an

AIR SUPERIORITY

The F15 Strike Eagle is the latest in a long line of F15 Eagles, whose development began in the mid '60s. Originally conceived as an ultra-powerful, ultra-fast air-superiority fighter, the design has developed into an air-superiority fighter with ground-attack capabilities.

The F15 Strike Eagle is one of the fastest, most manoeuvrable, and most powerful military aircraft in the world. It has the capacity to carry the latest air-to-air and air-to-ground armament in addition to its 20mm cannon.

The latest version of the Strike Eagle is equipped with a sophisticated zoom FLIR/TV/Laser target tracking system that allows the pilot to see close up views (either TV or thermal) of the target at all times.



MICROPROSE™
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and greatest from MicroProse will soon be available for Commodore Amiga and Atari ST.

For Brat, the hapless toddler of the title, the Land of Nod is a dangerous place. The moment he dozes off, his over-active infant's imagination will place him in a perilous make-believe environment, with a surprise and scare strong enough to wake him screaming around every corner.

It's vital that he has a proper night's sleep, lest his parents go spare. What the Brat needs is someone to guide him through his dreams and ensure nudding icky happen to him.

Like any regular dummy-sucker, Brat dreams of isometric 3D scrolling landscapes. His alter-ego appears in the middle of these landscapes and will walk in a somnabulatory manner in a single direction until he is prevented from doing so. Each landscape has a particular set of hazards which must be overcome or avoided. Your immediate aim is to guide Brat through each landscape, to the Finishing post.

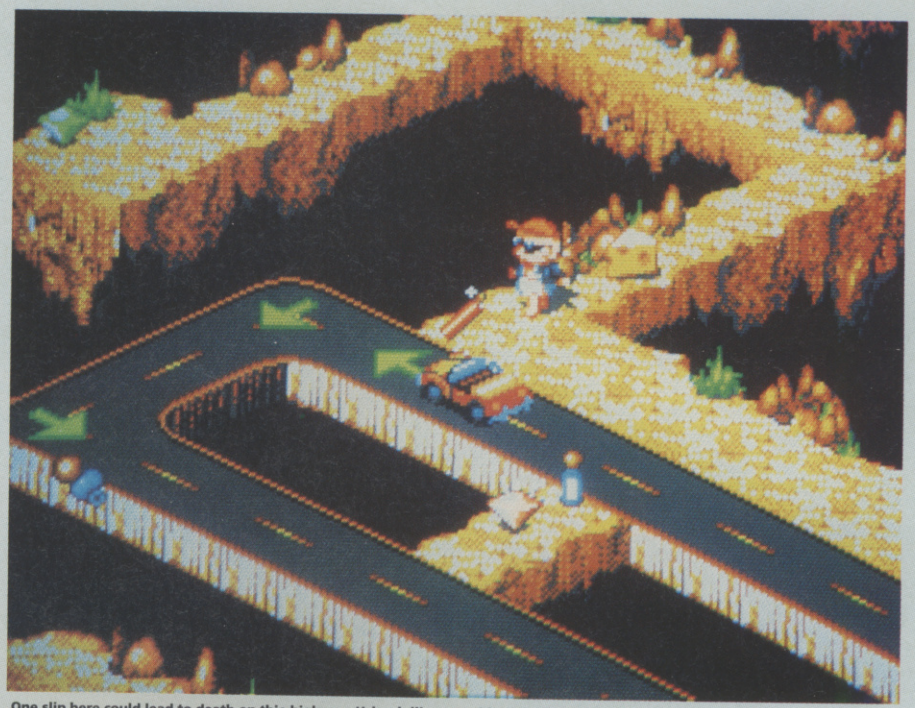
Wanted: IMAGEWORKS need child minder with superhuman hand-to-eye co-ordination.

The King of the Swimmers! Having successfully steered Brat around the fiendish spinning disc, you must help him through the underwater dangers. Using submarines to sink dangerous yachts is another skill particular to this stage.

Since you are unable to enter Brat's dream in a physical sense, you can only influence his behaviour by remote means. To this end, a panel on the right side of the screen contains a host of manipulative controls which can be highlighted with a mouse and then placed into the dream-world. Some of these can be used to effect objects and characters in Brat's dream directly, while others act as triggers activated when Brat walks on top of them.

The most commonly used controls are the eight direction pointers. From his initial angle of approach, Brat can be made to walk in any direction by dropping an appropriate arrow on the ground in front of him. When he reaches it, he will turn around and walk in his newly instructed direction. With these you can guide Brat past obstacles, steer him towards the swiftest route through the level or make him collect objects lying on the floor. The trick, of course, is to always think ahead, since an undirected Brat will always come to harm eventually. Even if a ledge is closed off by some hedges on one side, Brat will turn around on contact with them and proba-

Level 1, tha map. Whenever Brat encounters a set-back, he'll be transported back to the start of the level (unless ha has reached the half-way point)



One slip here could lead to death on thie highway. Using lollipops to block traffic will ensure that you have the necessary time to lay arrows to point Brat in the right direction. However, the lollipops' power isn;t infinite, and Brat will have to move swiftly.

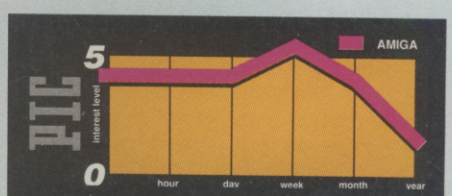
You blew it man! Whenetumbles off a ledge and loses his final life, this animated sequence pops up. Although it's a fine testament to the programmers capabilities, it can get a bit irritating and can be aborted.

Use of the Stop Brat and Stop Scroll icons in conjunction is a skill which must be mastered in order to progress in the game. Dipping Birds are a source of immense frustration, turning Brat around and sending him in the opposite direction.

bly walk off the opposite edge of the world. Any form of interaction with the world costs money. Brat's reserves of dream-cash can be seen in the panel, and can be replenished by collecting jewels and money which lie on the floor. Run out of cash (quite unlikely) and you can control Brat no more.

Perhaps Brat's most deadly enemy, that which is more likely than any other to illicit that cry which is about as appealing as chalk on blackboard, is the scroll of the screen itself. When he's walking diagonally down the screen, Brat moves slightly faster than the scroll, so he's doing a little better than standing still. At other times, when he's collecting objects or waiting for a hazard to pass, the screen's inexorable scroll will drag him closer to the top. On reaching the uppermost area of the view, Brat is done for.

Aside from the direction controls and the other environment-altering objects (of which more later) there's a trio of special icons in Brat's arsenal. There's the Stop Brat icon which halts his progress. And there's the Stop Scroll icon which, true to its name, stops the scroll for ten sec- ☞



Intially Brat is an extremly appealing game. The novelty of the control method is challenging and interesting, and the learning curve is pitched pretty well. However, its frustration potential is so high that it holds your level of interest down after the Day One peak.

ACE RATING
850

G	IQ	A	FF
8	5	6	6

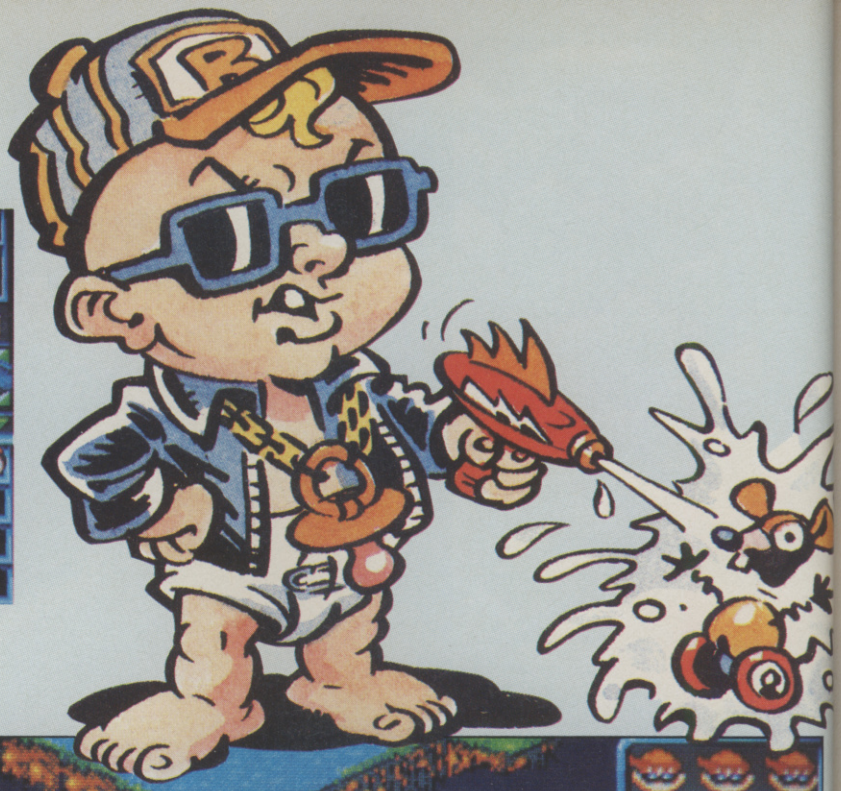
AMIGA

Extremely well presented with kiddy lettering and primary colours used in a parody of a nursery scene. Extremely little disk swapping necessary, but a lot of disk access - especially when you're trying to Continue (a wait of about a minute) irritates.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£24.99	IMMINENT

The dreaded Jack in the Box sends Brat spwarling. Prudent use of weights here could have avoided such problems. Were he to have made it to the road, he would have needed more lollipops to get past the traffic.



onds. The danger here, though, is that Brat may get so close to the bottom of the screen that you can't see what's coming next. Finally, there's Reverse Scroll, which should only be employed by expert Bratters. For ten seconds the screen changes direction, allowing Brat to go back up the screen to collect missed objects or take a different route which you may now realise is more useful.

Brat's world is full of ghoulish renderings of familiar playroom objects. There are Jacks in their Boxes which pop up and scare Brat. There are little lead soldiers which tramp up and down and bump into Brat. There are spinning tops which trundle into him and there are demonic cars which hurtle along giant Scalextric sets, running him down.

There are also boulders which sit in Brat's path, which must be demolished with dynamite. Each foe requires a specific solution, which is logical but a little frustrating. On early levels, the chances of Brat arriving improperly equipped to deal with a situation are slim, but the further into the game you get, the greater the trial and error level comes. Since Brat will always return to the start of each stage once he's come unstuck, the slightest error can really screw you up.

Indeed, the only real criticism which you can level at Brat is that it's irritation factor fluctuates from zero when things are going well to way beyond ten rather too easily for my liking. Even when blessed with a perfectly operating mouse, it's all too easy to make a slip which will cost you a life. Incorrect commands can be removed with a rubber (which also replaces the cash spent on the erroneous move) but the game then tends to deteriorate into a desperate scramble back and forth from dreamworld to icon-panel, collecting and dropping icons, making more mistakes, becoming more desperate and so on.

I guess the moral of such experiences is to remain calm and don't panic. However, the timing is sometimes so tight, that I found it necessary to pause the game, simply in order to move the mouse closer to the icon I wanted next.

Brat is undoubtedly a big step forward. It's a remarkably clever game which is easy to pick up and difficult to put down. If only it didn't make you feel like taking a hammer to the TV screen on quite such a regular basis, it'd be flawless.

●Jim Douglas

Swim! Move it, Brat! The long canals are tricky to negotiate and fraught with danger. Sharks, boats and other unmentionable things lurk beneath the waves. Very much a Trial and error level..

Time to Party Dudes! Brat's Intro (above) doesn't quite explain what the game is all abut, but is pleasant enough to look at..

The Slides of Horror! Each landscape has specific problems peculiar ti itself. You've got to think swiftly on this level, as Brat gets rocketted around even faster than usual.

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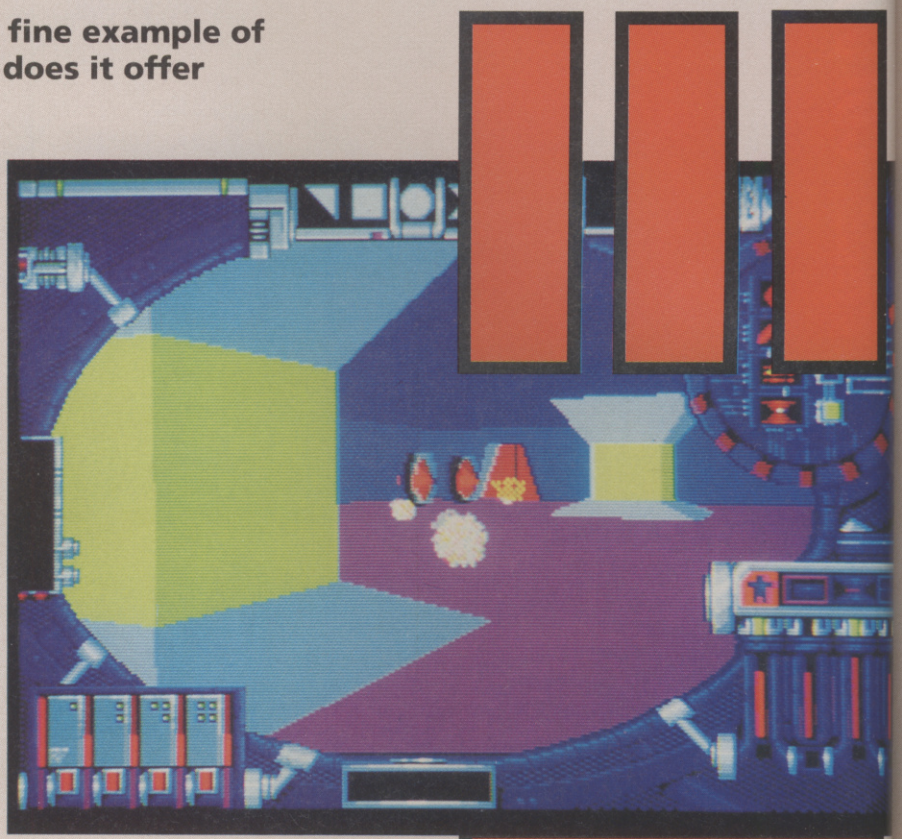
Cybercon III

US GOLD's Cybercon III is a fine example of the 3D polygon genre, but does it offer anything new?



Cybercon III - the world's most advanced artificial intelligence system, has been put in charge of all defence systems for the Democratic Union. A big mistake, as it turns out; Cybercon III has its own ideas about how to make the world safe for democracy, involving destroying all major population centres in a nuclear holocaust, eliminating other defence forces and shutting itself off from the world in an intruder-proof command centre. Only one man can penetrate the centre and deactivate the Brain Stem...

Cybercon III is The Assembly Line's most ambitious game program for US Gold to date; it's certainly a triumph of programming, but if the basic scenario sounds jaded, this might give you some idea of the problems with the game.

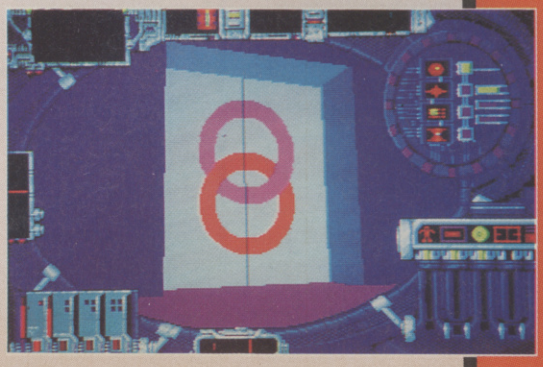
The basic idea is to steer a ten-foot-high, 4-tonne suit of Powered Armour (PA) around the Brain Stem complex, eliminating automated defences and finally destroying the Brain Stem. The game is presented from an out-of-cockpit view using fully animated 3-D solid polygons, and though this style has been used successfully in several previous games such as *Carrier Command* and *Interphase*, this is probably the smoothest, most colourful use of this style yet.

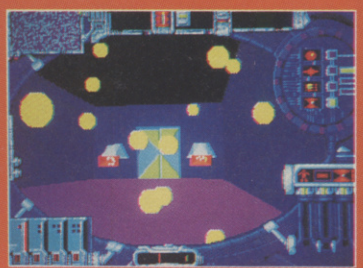
There's enough detail and complexity to satisfy the most demanding simulator fan; in fact, *Cybercon III* almost qualifies as a "PA flight simulator". Unfortunately, the program pays too much attention to "authenticity" and not enough to keeping the excitement going.

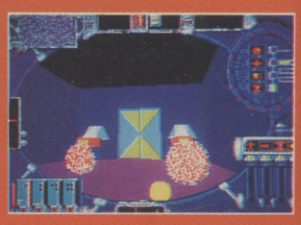
But the first major gripe is the protection system. As you materialise in the Mount Adam defence complex, rotating and moving the PA to explore your environment reveals that you can't get anywhere without interrogating the recognition circuits of the entrance door, revealing a sequence of code numbers in a window to the right of the door, looking up their numerical equivalents on the code wheel provided in the package, typing these on the keyboard, matching the icons this reveals with a series stored in your PA computer circuits, and transmitting this sequence to the door.

Finally the door opens and admits you to the main part of the complex, leaving you exhausted and frustrated before you've even started. It doesn't help that the codewheel is printed in black on a black background, and is cut out in a sloppy way which can obscure some of the figures.

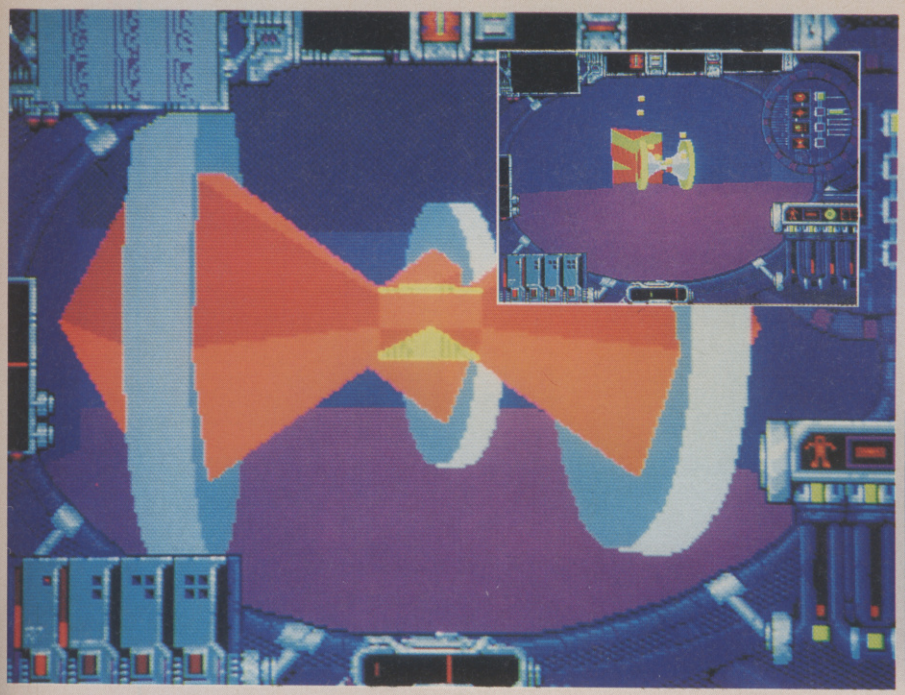
If you have the patience to get through all this, your next task is to contend with the PA's control system. This is so complicated and confusing as to defy belief, using 19 control keys, each relating to a control function illustrated on a panel icon. The fact that the icons seem to bear the minimum of resemblence to their functions makes it even more difficult to remember all the controls. The programmers evidently think that it's unhip to actually label the functions with understandable text; the result is that that while you are fighting for your life against the guardian

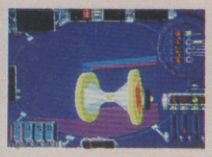






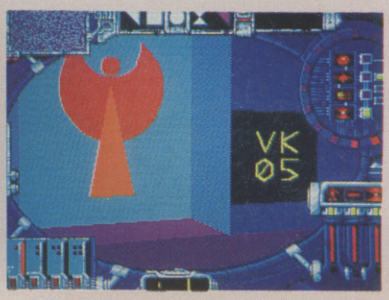
Blasting away at doors is unlikely to do much good (above), aside from yielding a beautiful showe of white-hot particles. Icon control of the game is a little over-complex, with few hints on-screen as to the nature of the icon you are about to select. There's a great deal of control panel switching necessary, as you power-down the batteries for equipment not currently in use, and crank up the others.

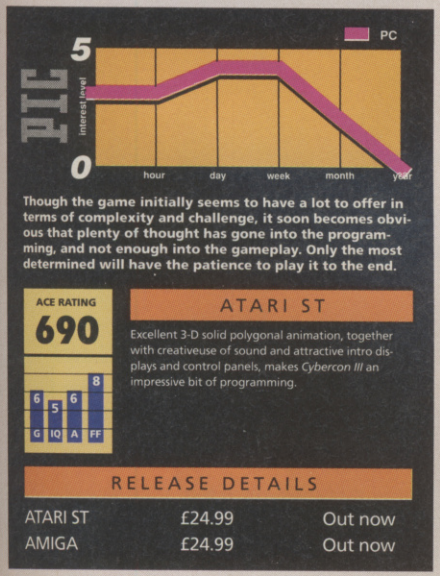




Entrance to the complex is via the security door. (Below) Use the sonic key to gain access. Wheel meet again (left). Don't know where don't know when, but I know wheel meet again some sunny day.

Steel Wheels (Left) These are the rank and file security drones, trundling back and forth in their inexorable quest to deal with human intruders. Striking the drones with lasers (Inset) will gradually weaken their resolve.





Though the game initially seems to have a lot to offer in terms of complexity and challenge, it soon becomes obvious that plenty of thought has gone into the programming, and not enough into the gameplay. Only the most determined will have the patience to play it to the end.

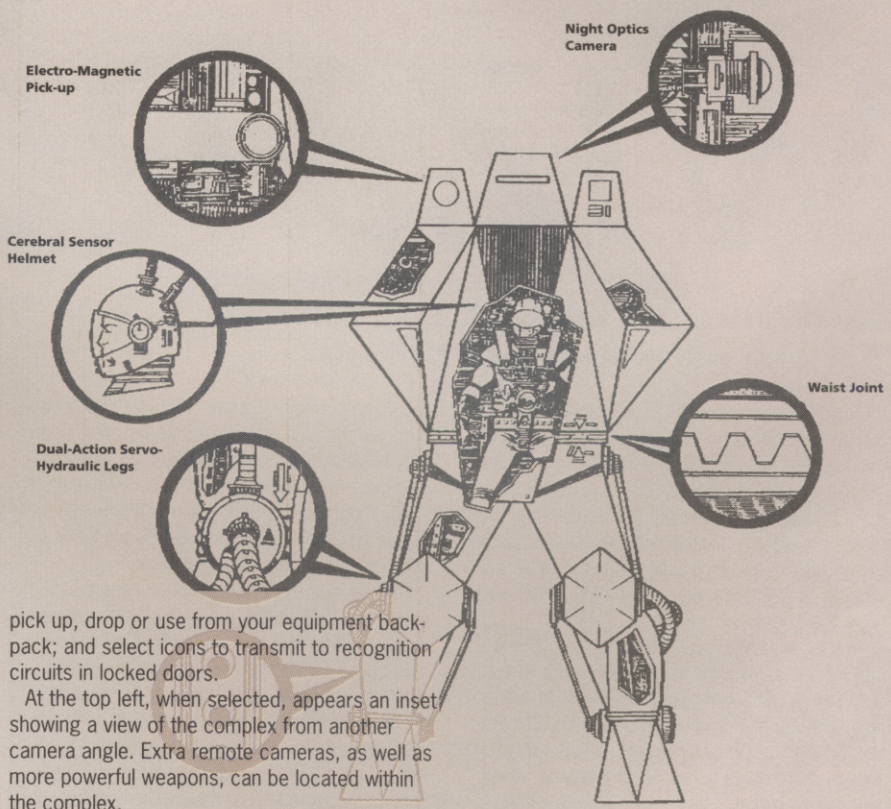
ACE RATING
690

ATARI ST

Excellent 3-D solid polygonal animation, together with creativeuse of sound and attractive intro displays and control panels, makes *Cybercon III* an impressive bit of programming.

RELEASE DETAILS

ATARI ST	£24.99	Out now
AMIGA	£24.99	Out now



robots, you also have to try to remember whether F4 toggles your energy cells on and off or activates your sonic key.

Not that the control displays aren't cleverly designed; at the bottom and left you have the vertical and horizontal gyrocompasses which show the orientation of your suit. You can rotate left and right using the joystick, move your viewpoint up and down and shuffle sideways using fire and up/down/left/right.You can also jump using F10, or enjoy a "controlled fall"!

At the bottom left of the screen is the battery display; this shows the charge remaining in your four power cells. At bottom right is the system on/off and damage display; this allows you to route your battery power to systems such as shields, weapons, instruments and repair circuits. It pays you to have unnecessary systems switched off to save energy, but it is possible to tap into reactors to refuel.

At top right is the weapon systems, camera selector and object manipulating display. This has four icons, each with three levels, selected using the cursor keys. It's the most confusing part of the display, and further complicates things by affecting what appears on the top section icon strip. Here you can select an object to pick up, drop or use from your equipment backpack; and select icons to transmit to recognition circuits in locked doors.

At the top left, when selected, appears an inset showing a view of the complex from another camera angle. Extra remote cameras, as well as more powerful weapons, can be located within the complex.

If you have the mettle to master all this, you have to face a complex of around 500 chambers, divided into sectors each with their own design features and challenges.

The mainstay of the defence system is the Cyberwheel robot, a trundling, energy-spitting device which is lovely to watch in action, until it blows you to bits. There are many different designs of robot, sharing certain modular elements, with different varieties of weapons and sensory systems; some detect your movement, some respond only when you activate equipment, and so on.

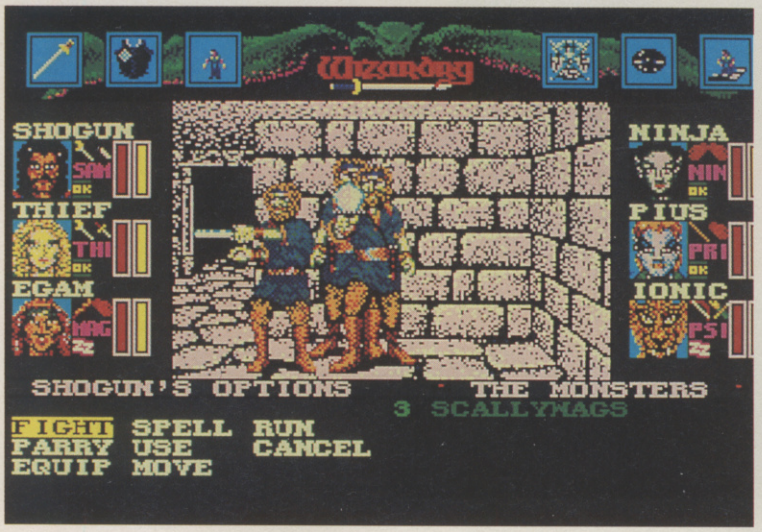
More deadly is the Nemesis, a floating hawk-shaped robot. By locating and knocking out robot factories your can reduce the number of attacks; to knock out the static gun emplacements, though, you have to disable reactors, and this will disable lifts and doors in that sector.

Using lifts, to move from one floor to another, requires you to match a series of icons shown inside the lift with codes from your sonic key. If you don't have the correct code icons, you can't activate the lift, so finding the codes is a major part of the game. Most doors open automatically in your approach, sliding up or across with an impressive grinding sound, but some have to be activated in the same way as the lifts.

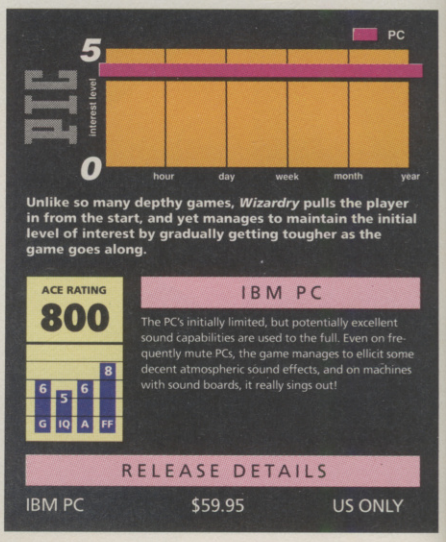
Altogether too many of the chambers seem to feature no challenge other than that of getting from one side to the other without dying of boredom.

Cybercon III looks wonderful; but it's frustrating to play, a bit repetitive, and packs no big surprises.

● **Chris Jenkins**



Who are these three scallywags? Oh, they're... er... scallywags. Okay, introductions out of the way, are you friend or foe? *(Slice!!)* Ah, you're a foe.



WIZARDRY VI

SIR TECH's latest release is their finest yet. But who will pick up the UK Rights?

The game is claimed to be four times the size of previous games in the series. It is contained on 4 x 3.25 360K disks but 'unpacks' on a hard drive to a total of 2.5Mb. A comprehensive 10 page manual covers all aspects of character creation, a huge choice exists and the various professions, race and attributes have subtle effects on each player's skills, all of which can alter the course of the game.

There are eleven races varying from Human, Elf, Dwarf and Hobbit to acid-breathing Dragons and the half-dog half-man Rawulf. Professions are also numerous; fourteen possible careers are available. You can opt to be a fighter, a mage, a priest, or a Psionic or Valkyrie, along with plenty more.

Even though the character creation is quick and pleasantly uncomplicated (unlike some of the products competitors) it manages to maintain a very wide variety of combinations.

It's likely however that as you become more developed in the game you will learn you have made some initial errors which although not fatal, may necessitate re-starting, with a more balanced party or a better blend within individual characters.

Having constructed the party, you can then start investigating the castle of a seemingly cursed King and Queen. The story then unfolds involving a love-child of the castle's priest, secret rooms, and of course, the Cosmic Forge.

This item of the title is an incredible celestial piece of hardware. Whatever the writer pens with this item becomes true! But there is a downside - the writer becomes subject to certain forces...

Previous criticism of the *Wizardry* series have included the lack of any depthy plot; this certainly has been satisfactorily addressed, greatly improving the degree of character interaction.

Other complaints have been of it's 'linear' feel - that of levels just piled on top of each other, without much room for exploration.

The Bane of the Cosmic Forge includes the mandatory dungeons, but also a belfry, towers, various precipices and ledges to fall off, a massive gorge with many bridges and passways, dwarf mines, a Wizard's cave, and a superb underworld complete with River Styx, Charron the boatman and the Isles of the Damned.

Problem solving includes the user of a multitude of items, involving drawbridges, altars and even a huge catapult. Character management and inventory control is a very important aspect of the game especially in the later stages. The game is indeed massive with weeks or months being necessary to complete the various tasks leading to the inevitable final confrontation.

The produce benefits 'dialogue' and location descriptions reminiscent of Infocom at its best, and the sound is excellent, adding fine atmosphere.

The game revolves around exploration and combat, making mapping essential in parts.

In summary, this is an absolute gem. It's simple, but has wonderful depth of play. It's not for adventure newcomers, but deserves to become a classic and establish the series outside the States.

●Robin Matthew

For more information, telephone Sir Tech Software on New York (315) 393 6451

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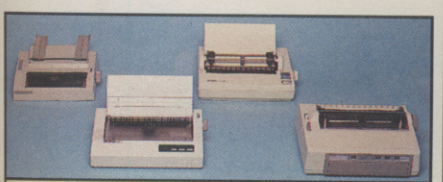
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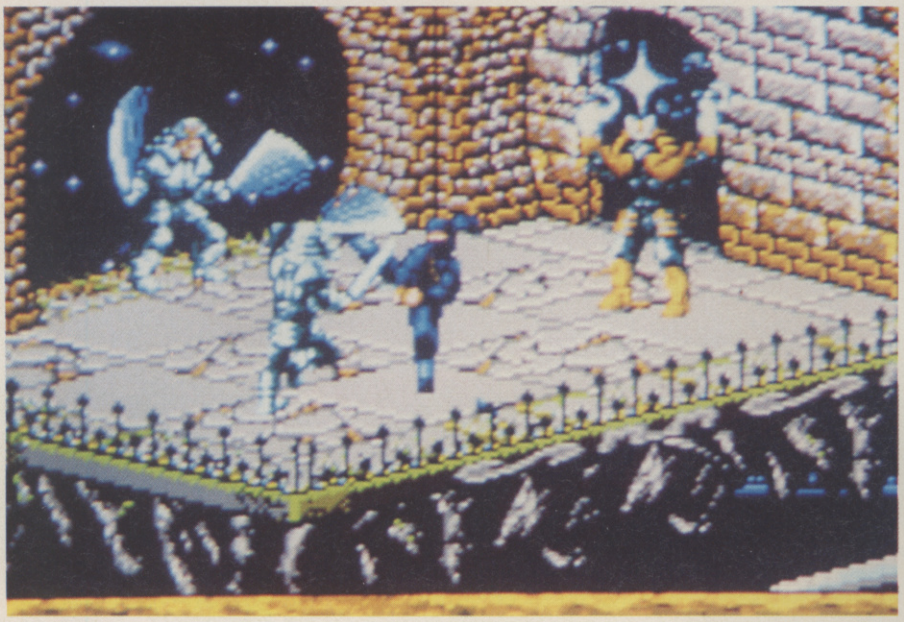


Battling the ever-more highly animated figures in the Water stage. The puzzles here are appropriate to the name of the level, with waterfalls concealing exits, platforms sinking into the water etc.

TRI-OOMPH!

SYSTEM 3, arguably the King of 8-Bit Publishing, makes bold moves into the 16-bit arena with a couple of familiar names and a brand new one

LAST NINJA

The success of the three previous *Ninja* titles in the series has established System 3 as the leading exponent of the genre. The games are a blend of combat and exploration, aiming to offer the player all the thrills of martial arts games along with some genuine puzzle solving too.

The 'final' instalment in the series, System 3 promise, will contain heightened levels of both styles, incorporating advanced fight routines and more depthy puzzles.

The game takes place in five zones, each based on a particular element; Earth, Wind, Fire, Water and 'Void'. It is these elements which, according to legend, provide the Ninja with their superhuman agility and fighting powers. Each

SILLY PUTTY

Forming perhaps a new-age of gaming, along with *Lemmings* and *Brat*, *Silly Putty* is a title which virtually defies categorisation. You play a lump of malleable silly putty with the nocturnal job of looking after a group of crazed robots who, solar-powered by day, go berserk at night due to the lack of sunlight. Of course.

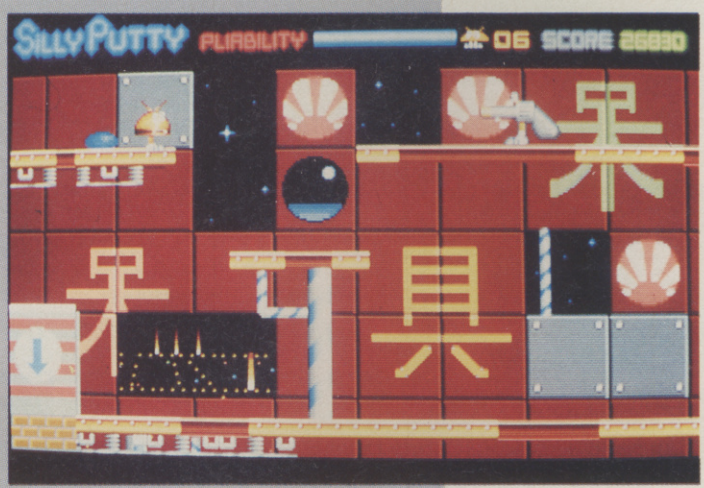
If that were not enough there are some bizarrely-designed baddies who are quite happy to see the 'droids reduced to dust, and will do their utmost to bring about their demise.

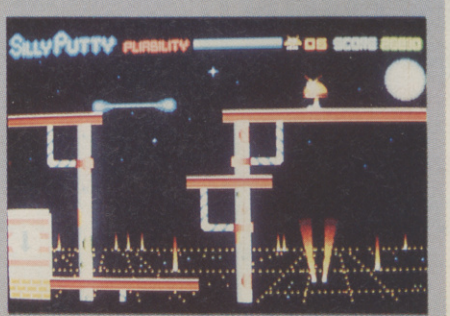
The player's aim is basically to keep the robots alive, protecting them from their own hysterical fits of self destruction as well as attacks from the wide variety of external forces (wizards, walking guns, spinning light bulbs, etc).

Control over the silly putty is simple. You can stretch in any direction, bounce anywhere, stab left or right or explode (to deal with foes). You can even take on the form of other objects in the game, assuming their behavioral peculiarities too.

Stretching and snapping, stabbing and squashing doesn't come free, of course. The moisture of the silly putty is always in danger of running down, with particular actions costing a lot of liquid. The answer is to absorb anything biological on the screen.

Apart from looking like a cross between Terry Gilliam's *Python* illustrations and the animations from *Pigeon Street*, it's quite appealing. *Silly Putty* is scheduled for a June release on Amiga.



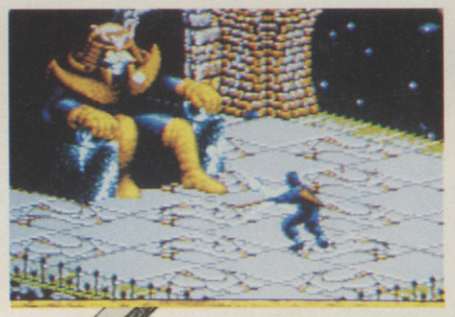


And s-t-r-e-t-c-h-! Using your flexible form (above) you can span gaps and cushion the falls of suicidal droids. Squash your putty low (top) to avoid bullets from the walking guns.

MYTH

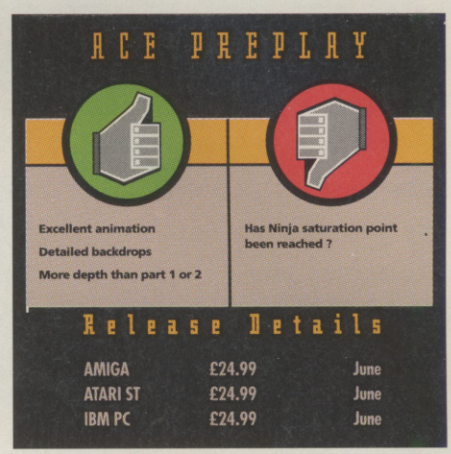
Myth was voted the Best 8-Bit Game of the Year in 1989. System 3 coders are currently working on a revamped version for the Amiga, and have gone for a big-graphics feel while still maintaining the idea of scale, the treat in the 8-Bit games.

As well as a top-notch musical score being added, with a fancy front-end full of digitised sound and speech, the central character has been changed from a contemporary figure in trainers and a leather jacket to a bare-chested, sword wielding barbarian. Look out for *Myth* in August.



The Final Showdown with your gigantic foe. Using all the skills of the ninja, you must block the bolts of light and deflect them back into the guy in the chair. His head rotates to spray the fire over a wide area. Unsuccessful deflections will deplete your energy. However, once mastered...

they can be used to deadly effect. The enormous sprites have become a trademark of the System 3 games, and these graphics certainly won't disappoint!



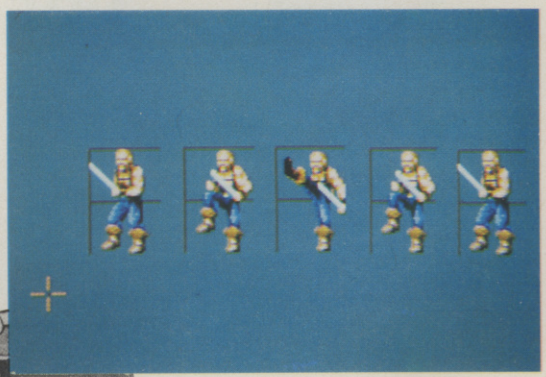
level has problems and foes appropriate to its name. The Water level has whirlpools to negotiate, Fire has deadly lava rivers, Wind has mini hurricanes and so on.

Your overall aim is to defeat evil itself, in this case personified by an enormous armoured warrior (remember Sam Lowry's dream in *Brazil*?). But before you get anywhere near this stage of the game, there's an extensive map to explore and a wide variety of opponents to kill.

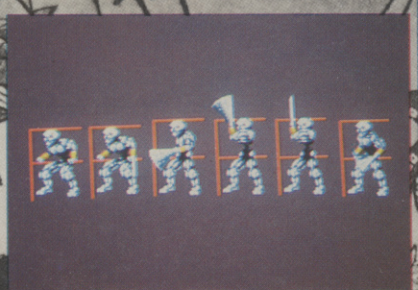
These opponents each specialise in a particular form of weaponry, and as a result have a fighting style distinct from other characters in the game. By successfully squaring up to an opponent with a similar weapon, your status as a fighter will be increased and your Bushido power will rise. The Bushido power acts as a supplement for your strength rating; bolstering your recovery rate and slowing its descent when under attack.

Problem solving in Ninja 3 is essentially a two-fold setup. Weapons aren't given to the player. Instead, he must use objects he finds lying around to build them. Two branches and the chain from a hanging basket can be made into a pair of chucks, a wooden glove and some nails make excellent Tigers' Claws, etc. Once effectively armed, the player's exploration becomes more swift, since he can deal more easily with his various opponents. The second main puzzle type is finding the exit to each stage. Each is hidden and requires a particular 'switch' to be thrown before it will be revealed.

Graphically, *Ninja 3* looks superb. The play area is attractive and atmospheric, and the animations for the bad guys quite incredible. It's gameplay too looks to surpass previous episodes.

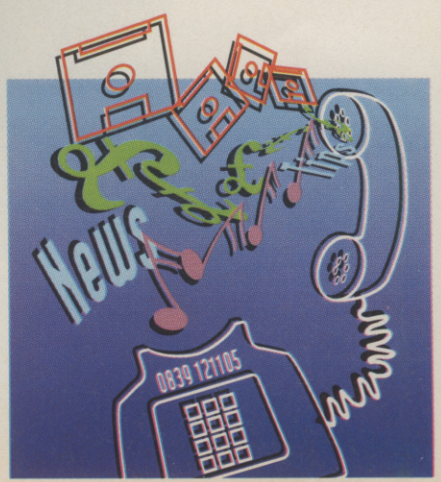


The fight animations for each character are truly impressive, with realistic touches like knees bending and new head positions adding a believable side to the bad guys.



WIN A NINJA COSTUME!

For the truly obsessed, System 3 are offering two authentic ninja costumes (complete with hoods!) to the lucky winners of our competition. And thirty runners up will receive a copy of the game for their computer. All you need to do is call the ACE Interactive Phoneline, listen to the questions and give your answers. What could be simpler? The competition will be on line from Wednesday, April 10th, and remember that calls are charged at 33p per minute off-peak and 44p any other time.



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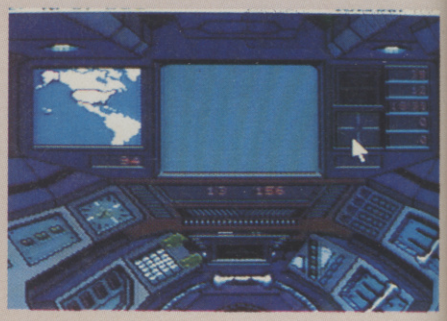
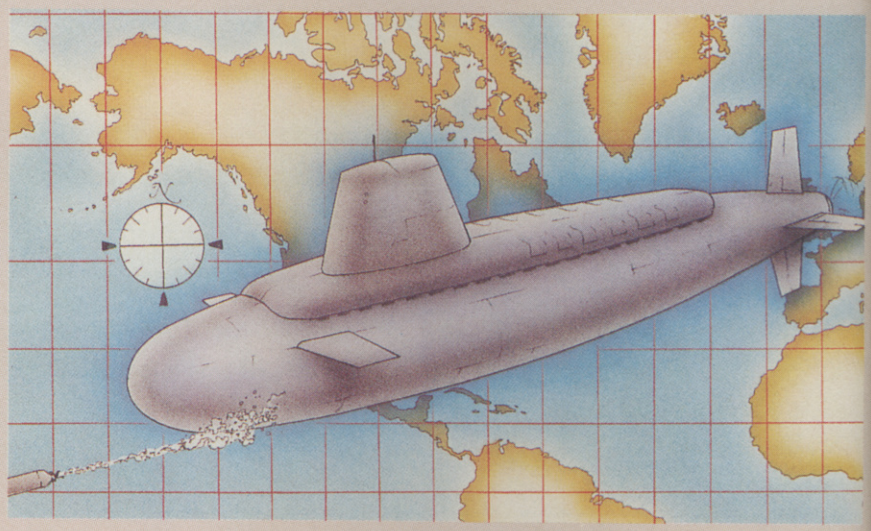
TNT Tricks 'n' Tactics



This month there are hot tips for *Iceman*, sixty codes for *Lemmings*, a *Colditz* playing guide, the complete solution to *Dragon's Lair II*, and lots, lots more...

Codename: Iceman

For all those readers getting through this very tough Sierra game, we've got the solution to the first three stages! Our deep and abiding thanks to Dave Driessen from Antwerp.



AT TAHITI:

LOOK TABLE. GET MAGAZINE. STAND UP. WEST. PLAY BALL. After the calls for help. SOUTH. SHAKE AND SHOUT. CALL FOR HELP. ESTABLISH AIRWAY. LOOK, LISTEN, FEEL. GIVE TWO BREATHS. LOOK, LISTEN, FEEL. CHECK PULSE. BEGIN COMPRESSIONS. EAST. GET SHIRT. NORTH. OPEN DOOR. TALK TO CLERK. GET KEY. READ SIGN. EAST. WALK TO BRUNETTE. ASK GIRL TO DANCE. STOP DANCING. BUY GIRL A DRINK. SIT. YES. KISS GIRL. KISS GIRL. KISS GIRL. STAND. LOOK TABLE. GET NOTE. OPEN DOOR.

Walk west until you see a glimmering in the bushes, but don't walk out of the screen. Walk to the glimmer and LOOK DOWN. LOOK GLIMMER. GET EARRING. OPEN EARRING. LOOK INSIDE EARRING. GET MICROFILM. Walk through the five screens, until you reach your hut (the third one from the volleyball screen) and OPEN DOOR. OPEN DRAWER. GET ID. GET CHANGE. OPEN CLOSET. GET BLACK BOOK.

Walk back to the hotel. BUY PAPER. OPEN DOOR. Now wait for the clerk's message and GET MESSAGE. Walk back to your hut. USE PHONE. 1-202-555-2729. TALK MAN. USE PHONE. 555-8000. TALK MAN. Walk back to the chair where the game started and enter the Nosinky Dinghy.

THE PENTAGON:

Walk through the glass door and SHOW ID. SHOW ID at desk. PUSH UP BUTTON in elevator. SHOW ID. STAND. GET ENVELOPE. Leave the room, walk to the guard and GET ID. LOOK ID. GET ID. Leave the pentagon. TALK MAN at the driver. YES. SHOW ORDERS.

THE USS BLACKHAWK:

Walk up the gangway. SALUTE FLAG. SALUTE OFFICER. REQUEST PERMISSION TO COME ABOARD. OPEN DRAWER. GET CALIPER. OPEN BOOKSHELF. GET DECODING BOOK. Leave the room. Do what the captain tells you until he invites you into his quarters. To confirm a green board type CONFIRM GREEN BOARD. STAND. When asked for code enter 134. LOOK BRIEFCASE GET ENVELOPE. LOOK CHART. LOOK ORDERS. When the captain puts away the briefcase GET COMBINATION.

Go back to the control room. LOOK TABLE. Use the map you got with the game to PLOT COURSE. EXIT. Sail the sub. If you get coded messages. STAND. GET MESSAGES. LOOK CODE BOOK. Now use the book you got with game to decipher the codes. Go to the captain's quarter's. OPEN SAFE. 23448803. OPEN CASE. 762134. USE ID CARD. INSERT MICROFILM. Following the letter N for navy is the number 3. Using the aforementioned messages. CLOSE BRIEFCASE. Go to your quarters. TURN ON COMPUTER. Type in primary and secondary words from Washington. When the empty box appears, Type Y. Enter primary and secondary decoded word from CIA. When the box appears type N. Go to torpedo room. CYCLE EQUIPMENT. INSPECT EQUIPMENT. MEASURE CONVEYOR BELT. MEASURE CYLINDER.

Go to machinist room. OPEN CABINET. GET CYLINDER. SIX INCHES. MEASURE COTTER PIN. USE LATHE. SET LATHE. 1" SETTING (one inch). TURN ON LATHE. USE DRILL PRESS at drill. SELECT BIT SIZE. 1/4" SETTING TURN ON DRILL. USE GRINDER. Go into the ending room. OPEN DRAWER. GET HAMMER. Go to the torpedo room. FIX CONVEYOR. With bottle. GET BOTTLE. If asked to play boss dice type YES. Win rum, money and device.

Go to control room. Sail sub. When captain invites you to the bridge, STAND. TALK. Walk to control panel. Dive to -500ft. Turn sonar off. Slow speed. Run silent. Wait until enemy fires weapons. Let the enemy close in. Lock on and fire weapons if sure that no enemy torpedoes are around. If you receive coded messages STAND. GET MESSAGE. Decode messages from Washington and CIA. Go to control panel. Activate TV-monitor. Navigate sub through icebergs. When you receive a message about a crack in the ice CONTACT ICE STATION. STAND after getting coded messages.

Go to radio man. GET MESSAGES. Decode messages. Walk to control panel and SIT. Fast dive to -1100ft. Reduce speed or stop. Sonar off. Run silent. Keep diving to -2300. Fire only if enemy is moving away from you or sit still until he leaves. After erratic sonar message signal Coontz with sonar ping. Get through the Straights of Gibraltar and stay under the Coontz by keeping the crosshairs over your sub. Captain tells you to come to periscope depth and speed, and look through the scope. STAND. LOOK SCOPE. Write down heading to offshore drilling rig and harbour. Press the down arrow key on the scope control panel. From sonar man, GET DISTANCE TO RIG. GET DISTANCE TO HARBOR.

Go to machinist compartment. Walk to machinist mate Willy Johnson and GET KEY. Go to the locked compartment in the storage compartment and OPEN COMPARTMENT. Go to the torpedo room; OPEN CABINET. GET EXPLOSIVES. GET FLARES. GET FLARES. Go to engine room and left to bulkhead. LOOK COMPARTMENT. GET DIVER. CHECK DIVER. CHECK VIBRATION. CHECK SHAFT. MEASURE SHAFT. Go to machinist compartment. OPEN CABINET. GET NUT. 1/2 inch. GET WASHER 1/2 inch. Go to engine room. OPEN DRAWER at tool compartment and PUSH BUTTON. GET DRIVER VEHICLE. INSTALL WASHER. INSTALL NUT. TIGHTEN NUT. ENTER COORDINATES. Enter distance to oil rig and harbour. Go to ladder leading to the escape hatch. CLIMB LADDER. OPEN HATCH. WEAR SCUBA GEAR.

The final stages of ICEMAN will appear in the next issue.

There are few places colder than one thousand feet under the sea, as you'll find out to your cost if you aren' very careful in *Codename: Iceman*

Higher, ever higher climb the ignorant little fools. Don't they know that they're just running into more trouble.

Lemmings

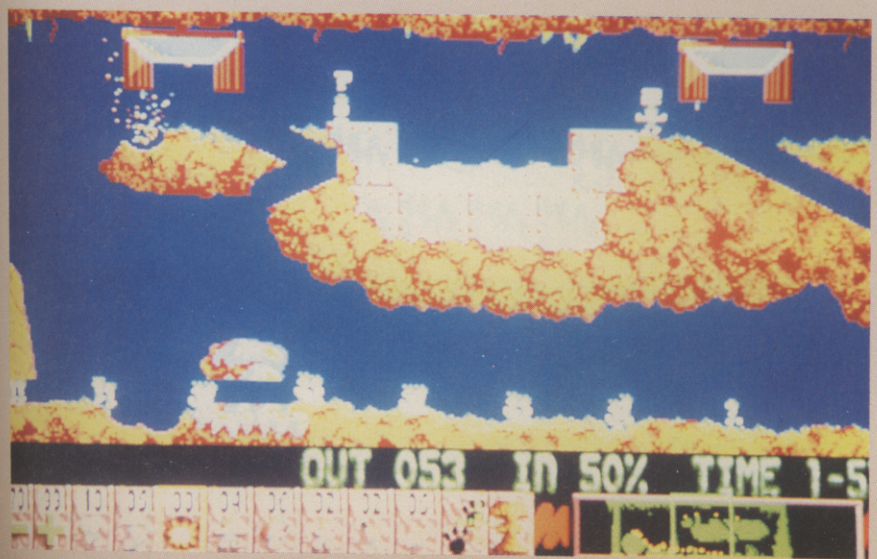
These codes for the first sixty levels of *Lemmings* come from Jason Hill from Andover.

EASY

2	IJJLDNCCCN
3	NJLDNCADCK
4	HNLHCIDECW
5	LDLCDJNFCK
6	DLCIJNLGCT
7	LCANKKDHCO
8	CINNLDLICJ
9	CEKHMDLJCO
10	MJHMDLCKCW
11	OHODHCELCS
12	JMDLCINMCK
13	MDLCAKLNCS
14	DLCIJNMOCM
15	LCENLMDPCL
16	CMNLMDLQCU
17	CEJHLFLBDX
18	IJILFLCCDN
19	OHNNHCEDDU
20	JNNHCMOEDP
21	LFLCCKLFDO
22	FLCMKLLGDJ
23	LCCOLLFHDU
24	CMOLNNHIDV
25	CCKHMGHJDM
26	OJHMFLCKDL
27	NJMGLCALDV
28	HONHCINMDR
29	MNJCEJLNDO
30	GLCOJLMODU

TRICKY

2	COOLMGLQDL
3	CAJJLDMBEV
4	KKHLDMCCEP
5	NHLDMCGDER
6	HLDMCMOEEX
7	LDMCAJNFEN
8	DMCKJMLGEX
9	ICGNMNDHEW
10	CIOLLLMIEL
11	CEKKOLIJEK
12	IJHMDMCKEV
13	NHMLICALEW
14	KOEICOOMEU
15	MDMCEJMNEJ
16	LMBIJNOOEY
17	KCAOLMMPES
18	CINMMDMQEU
19	CCKHNOIBFQ
20	KJJLFOCCFV
21	OHLFMCADFN
22	HNNICKOEFO
23	LGMCAKLFFQ
24	FICMKMLGFJ
25	MCGNMLFHFL
26	BKOLNGKIFQ
27	CAJJMGMJFS
28	IJJOOKCKFT
29	NIMFMCELFK
30	JMGMCKNMFT



TNT

☞ WE WOULD JUST LIKE TO POINT OUT...

Sincere apologies to readers waiting for the next instalment of the *Rise of the Dragon* playing guide - it's had to be held over until next month. Sorry! Also many readers have had problems with the *Supremacy* and *F19* listings from last month. Unfortunately they contained a number of errors.

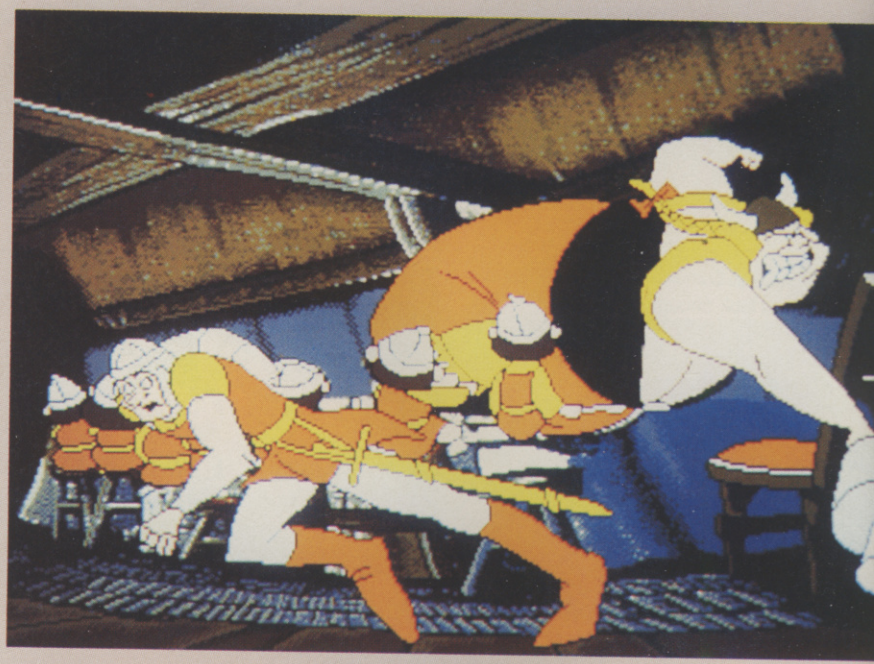
In the *Supremacy* listing, Line 220 should have read:

220 DATA 35FA, 45F8, 0900, 6126, 50F8, 35A6, 245A, 41F8

In the *F19* listing the following lines should read:

140 DATA 0086, 93C9, 4EAE, FEDA, 2ACO, 2A8D, 2B4D, 0008

240 DATA 4ED0, 7472, 6163, 6464, 6973, 6B2E, 6465, 7669



Whack! It went straight down the middle.

Always grab a snake by the tail, Dirk.

Ah, don't panic Dirk, these things are centaur try us!

Dragon's Lair III

Diiiirkkkkkkk!! My daughter married a prince who turned into a frog!! Ah, but she didn't you see, at least not if that prince is named Timothy Lock from Stratford, because he's solved the whole game! Luckily for all you would-be heroes out there he's provided us with a transcription of his quest...

SCENE 1: Easy. Push LEFT just a Dirk's mother-in-law looms over you.
SCENE 2: Pull DOWN then push RIGHT to avoid the tentacles.
SCENE 3: Press FIRE then go RIGHT to run from the old hag.
SCENE 4: Pull DOWN then jump LEFT.
SCENE 5: Jump LEFT, then jump UP to grab the snakes tail and go UP again to climb to safety (?).
SCENE 6: Jump UP as soon as this scene appears.
SCENE 7: Pull DOWN to balance on the rock then go DOWN when you start to slip off.
SCENE 8: Press FIRE to scare off the snake then push UP.
SCENE 9: Press FIRE to get the snake to leave you alone.
SCENE 10: Climb UP to the top of the time machine then jump RIGHT away from the persistent snake.
SCENE 11: Go LEFT, the tap FIRE, then go LEFT again.
SCENE 12: Pull DOWN to stop yourself sliding, hit FIRE then go LEFT.
SCENE 13: Press FIRE, go LEFT, then LEFT again, then hit FIRE one more time as the snake coils around you.
SCENE 14: Press FIRE, push RIGHT and when the sword's slotted into the time machine press FIRE again.
SCENE 15: Push UP to turn to face the reptile bird, and press FIRE TWICE.
SCENE 16: Push UP to fly past Mordroc.
SCENE 17: Tap FIRE to kill the bird, then push UP.
SCENE 18: Simple. Just push RIGHT.
SCENE 19: Very tricky, this one. Pull DOWN to duck, and hit FIRE to kill the pterodactyl. There will be a brief pause as the next part of the scene loads. AS SOON AS YOUR HEAR THE SOUNDTRACK START AGAIN HIT FIRE, then jump LEFT to put on the magic wings, jump RIGHT then go UP to take off.
SCENE 20: Dive DOWN to follow the plummeting Daphne.
SCENE 21: Jump DOWN to get your sword, dive RIGHT then climb back UP the time machine.
SCENE 22: Sit and watch Dirk get off the time machine then start to climb a vine.
SCENE 23: Pull DOWN to avoid the angel's swing then push UP.
SCENE 24: Again, pull DOWN then UP.
SCENE 25: Press UP and UP again.
SCENE 26: Jump LEFT to grab the vine, go DOWN to climb off, jump UP away from the angels then go RIGHT to escape.
SCENE 27: To avoid the snakes press FIRE THREE times.
SCENE 28: To avoid being squeezed dry, swing RIGHT, go UP and then climb UP again.
SCENE 29: Crouch DOWN then move RIGHT.
SCENE 30: Hit FIRE to give the snake a right royal headache.
SCENE 31: Punch FIRE to waggle to sword and activate the time machine.
SCENE 32: Now things really get tough. Jump UP to stop yourself plummeting to your doom then throw the sword using FIRE.
SCENE 33: Go UP, run LEFT, go DOWN, then jump RIGHT.
SCENE 34: Sword hits Mordroc. Just wait and watch.
SCENE 35: Go UP, go DOWN, then jump RIGHT TWICE.
SCENE 36: Timing is critical here. Push UP, go RIGHT, hit FIRE, then go LEFT.
SCENE 37: Push UP to avoid Mordroc's energy bolt then hit FIRE.
SCENE 38: Watch the ring land on Mordroc's finger.
SCENE 39: Pull DOWN while Mordroc mutates.
SCENE 40: Pull DOWN again, then press FIRE to put an end to the evil.
SCENE 41: To avoid the rocks go DOWN, then LEFT, then UP.
SCENE 42: Dirk tries to revive the stricken Daphne. Push DOWN, then hit FIRE twice to

brush away the reptiles.
SCENE 43: Tap FIRE to swipe at another reptile as Dirk slumps in despair.
SCENE 44: Daphne comes to. Hooray! Revel in the moment.
SCENE 45: Press FIRE to get rid off the very last annoying pest.
SCENE 46: What you've all been waiting for - the final, passionate clench. Go to it, lovebirds.

But why play the game when you can watch the movie? Marc Kushin of Ilford tells you how. On the title screen press RETURN then type in 'get mordroc dirk' (with spaces). Press FIRE and the whole game will play itself before your astonished eyes.

Time Machine

More sneaky work by Marc Kushin. Get onto the high-score table and type 'DIZZY'. You can now skip zones by pressing the appropriate key.

How callous! Fancy zapping helpless little furry creatures!

Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles

This here's a tip for the PC incarnation of the marketing phenomenon. When you begin the game, press keys E, S, W, and A together, and then press T. Now you'll have the ability to move anywhere on the screen, although you can still be killed. To complete the first stage you must enter a certain door that lead you eventually to Box-Pops with April. Killing him completes the stage. The only problem with this cheat is that you end up falling through the floor on the underwater section.

Thanks to Leon Condon from Berkshire for that!

So you don't have *Turtles* for your PC, so sewer us!

Escape from Colditz

It's not easy trying a dig a tunnel under the Chapel with a teaspoon, so rise one and all to show your appreciation for Stuart Hardy from Sheffield's playing tips.

OPENING DOORS

There are hundreds of doors throughout the Castle and many will be locked. A collection of keys and lock-picks can be found and used to open these doors. There are three types of door, which are:

Low Security Door - Use a lock-pick to open it.
Grade 1 Security Door - Use a Grade 1 key to open it.
Grade 2 Security Door - Use a Grade 2 key to open it.

Each key/lock-pick can only be used once but any unlocked doors will remain so until the end of the game. Beware when in the Prisoners' Quarters because many of the doors here lead into small empty room - therefore precious keys may be unnecessarily wasted.

Explore all areas as soon as possible and remember which contain useful items so they can be collected early on in future games.

AVOIDING GERMANS

The Castle is regularly patrolled by sentries, who walk around on selected routes looking to stop escape attempts.

Some Germans (if they think a POW's getting away) may open fire. As these guards are skilled marksmen, they will only need one bullet to kill a potential escapee.

To minimise the chance of a Guard shooting you in the back, place a solid object (such as a wall) between yourself and the Nazi. Even better is to walk through an unlocked door where you will be able to hide and should remain safe for a while. Wait in a room in 'Stooge' for a couple of minutes and the guard should go away, as they rarely enter certain rooms at all. However, leaving sanctuary too early may mean the guard is still snooping around and you are likely to get arrested.

Beware when opening doors because sentries have a nasty habit of waiting on the other side. Arrest in this situation is almost unavoidable, as you will usually walk straight into the German!

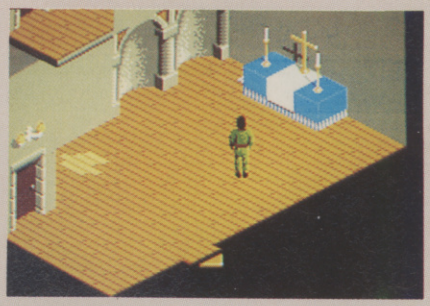
Remember there are always AT LEAST two sentries patrolling each Courtyard AT ANY TIME.

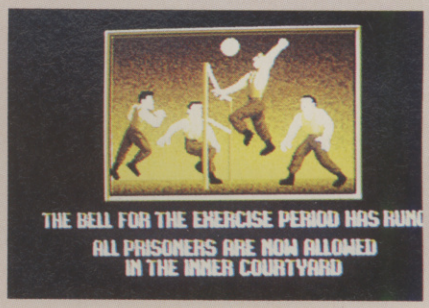
EQUIPMENT

Various tools and other important items can be collected to aid your escape. Most are hidden behind walls, tables and bunks, etc, so you should investigate every possible hiding place.

Some of the most important equipment includes:

Keys - Use these to open specific doors.
Lock-pick - Use these to open low-secutity doors.
Uniform - Disguise yourself as a Nazi.





Pass - Use this with the uniform. It will be discarded if stopped and interrogated by genuine sentries.
Papers - Needed at the main gateway in conjunction with the Pass and Uniform.
Pick-axe, Saw, Spade - Use to re-open disused tunnels.
Candle - Needed in tunnels to light your way.
Stone - Throw to distract the attention of suspicious guards.

Never carry too much equipment at once because if you're caught every item will be confiscated and lost. Stash equipment in 'Safe' areas (such as the Chapel) as these places are never searched by the Germans. Although several trips may be required and this can be time consuming, you run no risk of having valuable equipment confiscated.

GENERAL HINTS

Pressing the F9 key will allow your POWs to go to sleep in a bunk at their start location. This is very useful at night because the Fatigue bar will diminish. If a tired POW is sent to Solitary, rest him for a few minutes when he is returned to his Quarters.

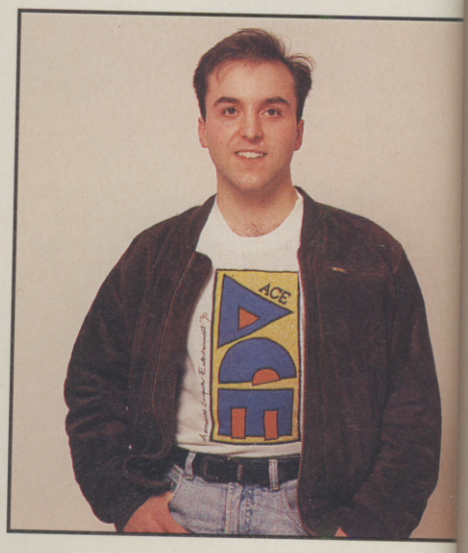
Use the map supplied with the game as it gives an outline to each sector of the castle. Although not every room is included, at least it show you roughly your current whereabouts.

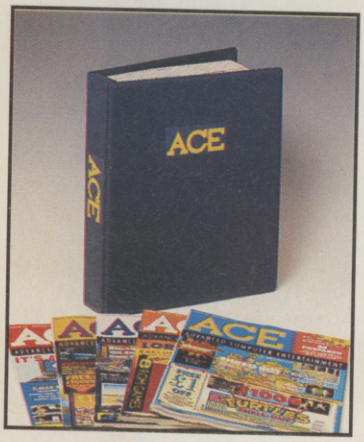
Nazi guards will not hesitate to open fire if it looks as if you are getting away. If a pursuing sentry stops running then it's a safe bet he's about to fire - and they never miss. A good tactic to avoid this is, if the German is not too close, to suddenly stop running. The sentry will run towards you to make an arrest at which point you should should continue your escape and head for a door or obstacle to put between you. As it takes about a second for a Nazi to raise and lower his rifle you will still be able to successfully avoid him - but only if your timing is right!

Fatigue plays an important part in the game, especially after a POW has been doing a lot of running. If the Fatigue bar is ever filled, you will only be able to walk. ☞

ACE MERCHANDISE OFFER

There can surely be nothing more sexy and fashionable than the ACE t-shirt. This latest item in the *Ace Clothing Collection* is what every self respecting computing genius will be wearing this season. The eye catching ensemble has been exclusively designed by ACE's own art editor, Jim "Gaultier" Willis, for the lover of fine things and the reader with good taste. The t-shirt is available in sizes small, medium and extra large and can be purchased at the ridiculously low price of £5.99





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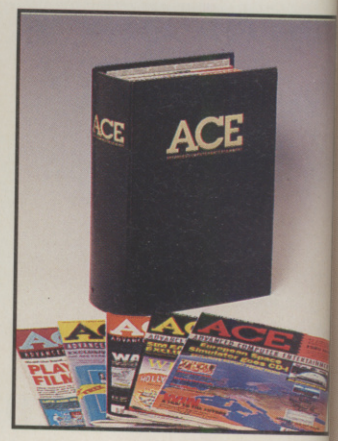

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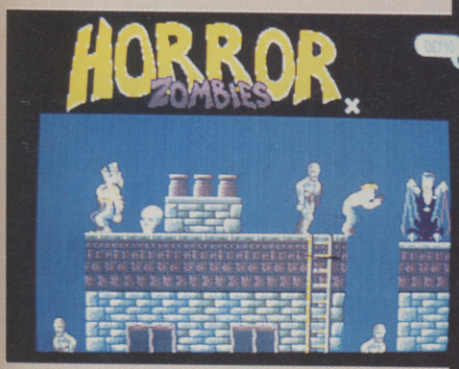
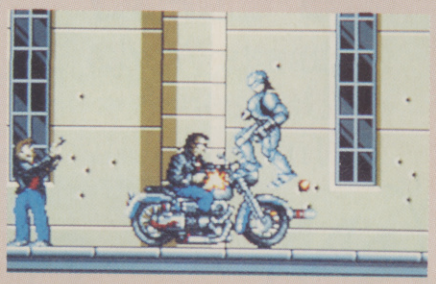
Horror Zombies from the Crypt

Want infinite lives? Of course you do. Just simultaneously hold down the 'M'-','-'.' keys and there you go.



Robocop 2

This is one tough game. Those still having trouble defeating the Cain gang may want to try typing in 'serialinterface' (no space) on the Amiga version's title screen. A cheat screen should come up. Thanks to Richard Johnson from Derby for that.



Breathin' fire should be a lot easier with this *St Dragon* tip.

Saint Dragon

More infinite lives fun here! While the game is loading hold down both the left mouse button and fire on the joystick, and you'll have more liddle dwagons than you'll ever need.

Fighter Bomber

PC owner Richard Robarts from Waddington complains about the lack of tips and cheats for his machine. Sorry, Richard, we can only print what we get from you the readers, and the PC users seem a little backward in coming forward. To redress the balance, Richard provides this tip for *Fighter Bomber*:

Load up the game as usual from hard drive or floppy, and select your pilot. Go to the mission select screen. Instead of clicking on a mission category (Tactical, etc), click on 'USER MISSIONS' and then click on the 'SELECT' box. To the left of the SELECT screen there will be a table showing the missions you've designed yourself. Select the drive you're running the game from. Now comes the clever part. Click on the text entry box at the bottom of the table and enter the following eight character codes depending on the game mission you want to play:

SLEEPER	for OPERATION SLEEPER
FARMHOUS	for OPERATION FARM HOUSE
BRIDGEEN	for OPERATION BRIDGE END
STRIKEFO	for OPERATION STRIKE FORCE
SPEARCHU	for OPERATION SPEAR CHUCK
NAVARRON	for OPERATION NAVARRONE
SAMSMASH	for OPERATION SAM SMASHER
AXEATTAC	for OPERATION AXE ATTACK
TENTBUST	for OPERATION TENT BUSTER
COOKHOUS	for OPERATION COOK HOUSE
BIGBIRD	for OPERATION BIG BIRD
MOLESTRA	for OPERATION MOLE STRANG
AMMODUMP	for OPERATION AMMO DUMP
BROKENAR	for OPERATION BROKEN ARROW
BIGCHIEF	for OPERATION BIG CHIEF
FINALFRO	for OPERATION FINAL FRONT

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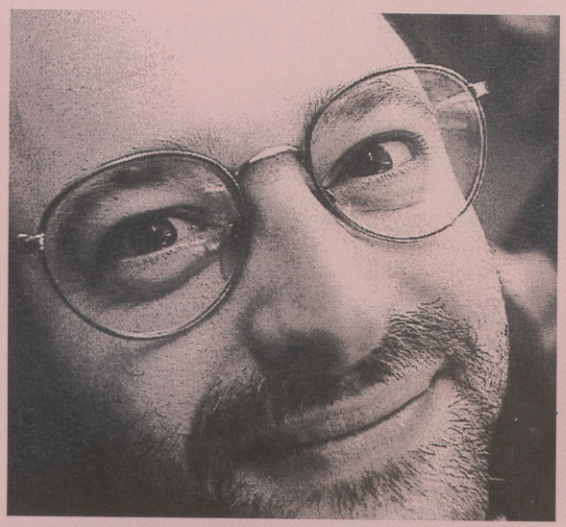
OUT NOW!

NO KIDDING

- A Complete Playable Trainer Level of *Brat* – it's 'infant-tastic'
- See Page 8 for Full Details

04

in the PINK



He's in the pink – and judging by the sight of him, you're lucky if you never meet him in the flesh. Erstwhile ACE editor Steve Cooke is now helping put together the Pink Pages for us. If you've got any suggestions on how the section could be improved, write to him at the usual ACE address (see the contents page of this issue). Also a special notice to advertisers: our fax number 071 490 1094 is temporarily out of order. Please use 071 490 1095 until further notice. And thank you to the b*****d who pinched the fax...

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Which game is getting top review marks for YOUR machine, as printed in ALL UK games magazines? This is is the only accurate sampling of review marks in the industry, telling you which games are getting the hot ratings and which are being tossed in the bin by the country's major games reviewers. And what's more, you can win a prize by trying to precit next month's entries.

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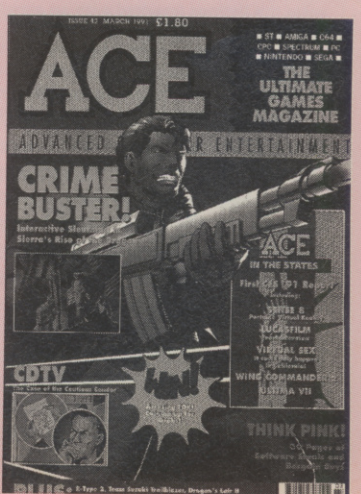

ACE has brought you over 40 issues, all packed with info on games technology. If you're missing any back issues – such as this one, which gave you exclusive coverage of the first PC based VR system – then telephone 0858 410510 for availability and order details

ACE CHARTS

The ACE Charts give you the definitive list of top scoring games EVERY MONTH – as reviewed by ALL British games magazines.

DID YOU WIN LAST MONTH?

Oh boy, we appear to have a CONSPIRACY here! Veteran Stock-watcher **Phil Maxfield** of Rotherham seems to have started distributing his (usually accurate) forecasts to all and sundry in the Rotherham area. Did they strike lucky? Well, first Phil himself gets a prize for spotting that the CPC chart was incorrectly printed. We do apologise for this – it hasn't happened before and it won't happen again. **Daniel Maharry** of Margate got Lotus for the CPC correctly, however – you get the prize, Daniel, even if the chart said otherwise. **Scott Bruce** of Cheltenham was one of the few people to spot Sierra as top softco. **Nicholas Watts** of Esher got Powermonger for the ST. **John Shearing** of Godstone got Prince of Persia for the PC and well done to David Tsang of Belfast who got Turrican II for the C64. And finally, yay! One of the Rotherham clique (**Pete Earnshaw**) comes up trumps by being the first out of the hat with Lemmings on the Amiga. Safety in numbers, eh chaps?

What you can win...
You'll get a mystery game worth up to £25 for your machine if you can pick out NEXT MONTH's top chart entries. Get all five right in any category and you'll get £150 worth of software! Entry instructions are opposite.

AMIGA

Speedball 2	Image Works	94.39
Lemmings	Psygnosis	94.25
Turrican 2	Rainbow Arts	93.28
Chaos Strikes Back	Mirrorsoft	90.1
SWIV	Storm	89.67

Last month's 1 and 2 are edged out by *Speedball 2*. *Turrican 2*'s attracting improved ratings as well.

C64

Turrican 2	Rainbow Arts	94
Creatures	Thalamus	90.5
Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge	Gremlin	90
Robocop 2 (cartridge)	Ocean	87
SWIV	Storm	86.33

Turrican 2 resists all competition as it stays firmly on top of the C64 chart. But Creatures is picking up raves all round – and Robocop II could mark the beginning of a cartridge revolution on the 64.

AMSTRAD CPC

Robocop 2	Ocean	92.84
Impossaball	Players Premier	84
Pick'n'Pile	Ubi Soft	82.5
Dragonbreed	Activision	79.17
Strider 2	US Gold	74.34

A much stronger CPC chart this month, with three titles over 80% and Robocop 2 clanking in at over 90. Yet another Ubi game makes it into the CPC top five - that's five different titles in three months.

IBM PC

Red Baron	Dynamix/Sierra	95.33
Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix/Sierra	94.34
Links	US Gold	91
Countdown	US Gold	87.5
Stellar 7	Dynamix/Sierra	86.5

Rise of the Dragon has increased its average rating by nearly six points – Dynamix is threatening to take over here!

THE STOCKMARKET

In addition to our games charts, we also have a bit of fun with the figures each month when we produce the ACE Stockmarket. It's a list of the top 25 softcos as determined by the ratings their games are currently receiving. You can see their fortunes rising and falling in each issue...

Having collated all the games reviewed in the latest issues of computer magazines, we calculate the average mark that each publisher received for every one of its games on each format. This is the rating that you see in the second column. So, for example, if the company is great at sourcing 16-bit games but botches up its 8-bit conversions, that will pull down the average mark, even if you can see one of its titles heading up the Amiga, ST or PC charts on these pages. If all the games are excellent, or if the company has just one brilliant program doing the rounds at the moment, it will consequently have a high rating.

The last column shows how well a company's games have fared compared to the Software Index. This single figure represents the average review mark (expressed as a percentage) that all games, all formats, received during the last month. It's a quick guide to how good the current crop of titles is, and each company's Index score shows how well their games compare to the norm. For example, in this month's chart, Image Works' current titles are worth 14.02 percentage points above average - according to the industry's reviewers..

We print only the top 25 companies each month. Occasionally a new company will enter the listings (marked with an asterisk). This month, we welcome the Bitmap Brothers and Mirrorsoft's budget label Mirror Image to the ACE Stock Market.

Finally, we don't count companies which have only received a single solitary review.

Software index: 72.59
This sharp drop of over three points looks all the more surprising, when you look at the number of companies scoring well over 80 per cent on average. But there have been a lot of games around which have been slated by reviewers: for example, one title, which had better remain nameless, scored an average of 11 per cent!

PUBLISHER	SCORE	+/-	INDEX				
Rainbird	92.67	n/a	20.08	Digital Magic	83.13	n/a	10.54
*Bitmap Brothers	92.25	n/a	19.66	Code Masters	82.00	+5	9.41
Dynamix	89.33	n/a	16.74	Infogrames	81.79	+2.91	9.2
Rainbow Arts	88.51	+1.84	15.92	Mirrorsoft	81.60	n/a	9.01
Thalamus	87.75	n/a	15.16	Ocean	80.88	+2.97	8.29
Activision	87.00	+7.33	14.41	Mindscape	79.33	+4	6.74
*Mirror Image	86.64	n/a	14.05	PSS/Mirrorsoft	79.00	n/a	6.41
Image Works	86.61	+6.53	14.02	Action 16	76.29	+0.71	3.7
Zeppelin	86.50	n/a	13.91	US Gold	76.01	-3.03	3.42
Psygnosis	85.63	+3.32	13.04	Hit Squad	76.00	-7.33	3.41
Core Design	85.50	+0.83	12.91	Dinamic	75.67	n/a	3.08
Gremlin	84.82	+0.96	12.23	Millennium	75.19	-2.06	2.6
				Sierra	74.33	-13.51	1.74

WHAT THE FIGURES ABOVE MEAN...

First, of course, you've got the game. Then the software house and – in the last column – the average score (converted to a percentage with typical ACE precision to two decimal places) the game received in ALL reviews during the last month. Don't forget that the review ratings are taken from all UK magazines, not just ACE, so we don't necessarily agree with some of the judgements here, but all review ratings are, to a certain extent, subjective.

SPECTRUM AND ST CHARTS OPPOSITE

HOW TO ENTER

STEP ONE

Find a **postcard** – or write your entry on the **back of an envelope.** Enter your name and address, a daytime telephone number if you have one, and the Round Number.

STEP TWO

Tell us your age and which machine you own. Just in case you win!

STEP THREE

Examine this month's charts. Then, using your knowledge of the games scene, try to predict which games will come top of the six machine specific charts. Finally, enter on your postcard:

- the top game for the Spectrum
- the top game for the C64
- the top game for the CPC's
- the top game for the IBM PC
- the top game for the Amiga
- the top game for the ST

YOU DON'T HAVE TO ENTER A SUGGESTION FOR EVERY MACHINE! But remember that your chances of winning may increase if you do.

STEP FOUR (OPTIONAL)

You can also try to predict which company will be at the top of next month's Stockmarket listing (see this page). Enter on the card:
'**The top softco will be...**(name of company)'

STEP FIVE (OPTIONAL)

If you want to go for the jackpot £150 prize, then select any of the previous categories and try to predict the top FIVE entries for next month instead of just the top one. Then tell us which category you're predicting for – it can be either the Stockmarket or any of the machine categories in Step Three. REMEMBER – YOU CAN ONLY SUBMIT **ONE** JACKPOT CATEGORY!

STEP SIX

Post the card (WITH a stamp!) to us to arrive not later than the closing date for this round (30th April). The address is:

ACE Stockmarket
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London
EC1R 3AU

The first correct forecast for each category taken out of the hat wins the prize. If you get more than one entry correct, you'll be entered in further draws for each category, thus increasing your chances of winning a prize. And don't forget to include the Round Number!

THIS IS ROUND 18

Each month's competition has a round number so that we can correctly identify entries. You MUST include the round number on your postcard otherwise your entry may not be processed correctly.

THE RULES

- All entries must be received by April 30th 1991.
- No employees of EMAP, or of any company involved in the production, distribution, or sale of ACE Magazine are eligible for entry.
- Only one entry per household. Proof of posting not held as proof of delivery.
- We cannot undertake to deliver specific software titles as prizes, but rest assured that we will make every effort to ensure that the games get the adrenalin pumping!

ATARI ST

Midwinter 2	**Rainbird**	**95**
Gods	**Bitmap Brothers**	**91.5**
Speedball 2	**Image Works**	**91**
Team Suzuki	**Gremlin**	**88.5**
Car-Vup	**Core Design**	**85.75**

Huge score for *Midwinter 2: Flames of Freedom* means that *Gods* and *Speedball 2* (both by the Bitmaps but different publishers) have had to settle for 2nd and 3rd slot.

SPECTRUM

Total Recall	**Ocean**	**88.25**
Back to the Future 3	**Image Works**	**87.5**
Light Corridor	**Infogrames**	**86.67**
F16 Combat Pilot	**Digital Integration**	**86**
Switchblade	**Gremlin**	**83.5**

Unusually for the Spectrum, there's no budget title in the top five, as publishers turn to the movies for their current inspiration.

THEM AND US

While virtually all reviewing systems used in the magazines covered in the Stockmarket are valid, it's worth noting that the ACE reviewing process is distinct from the rest of the bunch.

ACE doesn't review every game on the market each month. We don't intend to. However, we don't merely cover the games we like.

Instead, we aim to offer the best reviews coverage by writing about the games which need reviewing.

High-profile titles such as major licensing deals, coin-op conversions will receive equal amounts of space as less-publicised products which nevertheless warrant more explanation.

Equally, there's no fixed amount of space which we'll devote to a title. Don't expect us to give a big licence a colour spread review. It's likely that many of the biggest tie-ins are the most basic games. If the plot, play and point can be summed up in a single page, than that's the way we'll handle it.

Our ratings are designed to give a better idea of all aspects of the game. The body text of the review contains an outline of the game, and some opinions of the reviewer as to the success or otherwise of the programmers. While these opinions are of an individual reviewer, you can rest assured that it will generally concur with the views of the rest of the team.

The scores panel at the end of the body copy will sum up everything said in the review, so you can easily remind yourself of our feelings without necessarily reading the text first. Distinct from mags which simply give a score, our *six* ratings cover all aspects of the game and rate them on an accurate and demanding basis. The PIC curve and curve comment tell you how well or otherwise the game will retain your attention. Depending on the features you're looking for in a game, this an important factor. If you're flush enough to buy a new game every week, it won't matter as much if it doesn't hold your interest for more than a fortnight. If you've saved up for ages, you'll be looking for a high-scoring PIC curve right into the Month or Year period.

The Overall score pretty much speaks for itself, being taken from the Nirvana-like 1000 (never awarded - *nothing* is perfect). A game scoring over 700 in this area is viewed as being pretty hot. Upwards of 800 is heartily recommended and a 900 rating means you should rush to the shops without further ado.

The graphics, IQ, Audio and Fun Factor ratings simply break down the games salient features into easily-managed chunks.

Remember; only ACE offers such depth at an affordable price!

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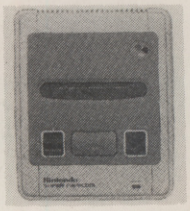

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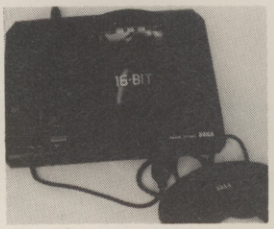

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HARD SELL

Bang on the drums and parp on the trumpets!! It's a very special *Hard Sell* this month. Not only are we printing the full hardware specifications for all the major consoles AND computers (for the definitive at-a-glance comparison test), we've also included an information run down on Nintendo's stunning new Super Famicom. But just how 'super' is it? Read on....

Supplier telephone numbers are their own unless PR agencies are available. As a general rule, however, your local dealer should be the first place to start asking questions.

The Star Ratings go from one (poor) to five (excellent). But remember - these should be taken into account along with your own needs and preferences.

AMSTRAD GX4000

Package: GX4000 console, 2 controllers and *Burning Rubber* game.
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IN BRIEF

Amstrad have partly gone up the Commodore path, but have wisely taken the opportunity to upgrade the hardware. The palette is increased, with multitasking hardware scrolling and 16 hardware sprites increasing to 32 with interrupt tricks. Unfortunately the sound chip is the same old tinny one used in the CPCs, albeit in stereo - you can't have everything, I suppose. While some software houses express reservations of the machine being a success outside Europe (and hence reticent about committing support to it), many are working on titles for the machine.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: Same as Amstrad CPC.
Palette: 4096
Colours: 32
TV: Yes.
Monitor Output: Yes.
Monitor Supplied: No.
Monitor Options: SCART, Amstrad socket.
Sprites: 16, 32 with hardware interrupts.
Speed: Good for 8-bit technology.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on TV/monitor.
MIDI: No.
Stereo Output: Yes.
Performance: Unimpressive 3 channel chip as on old CPCs, but now runs independently of main processor.

HARDWARE

Joystick: 2 game controllers supplied.
Ports: Monitor/TV ports, stereo headphone socket, 3 joystick ports (2 digital, 1 analogue).

SOFTWARE

Price: Around £25.
Cartridge Memory: 128K
Existing Software Base: Small.but growing fast.
Current Releases: Thirty titles due by January 1991.
Prospects: Very good, with several software houses working on titles.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: None as yet.
Maintenance: One year guarantee.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★★
Expansion: ★★
Overall: ★★★★

ATARI LYNX

Package: Lynx with *California Games*.
Processor: 16MHz 6502
Console Memory: 64K
Recommended Retail Price: £179.95
Contact: Atari PR 071 388 9871

IN BRIEF

The Lynx was designed by a team including RJ Mical, one of the men behind the Amiga. If that doesn't convince you consider it runs a fast 6502, has 8Mb of game storage on its cards and supports multi-player games. The graphics hardware has built in hardware scrolling and image scaling. Software is a little thin at the moment but bound to increase during 1991.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 160 x 102
Palette: 4096
Colours: 16
TV: No
Monitor Output: No
Monitor Supplied: Yes - 3.5 inch backlit colour LCD
Monitor Options: None
Sprites: Special graphics hardware effectively treats ALL screen objects as sprites!
Speed: Fast

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Very good
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 4 channel, 5 octave stereo sound has to be heard to be believed.

HARDWARE

Joystick: 4 way joypad.
Ports: Cartridge port; multi-player port; miniature stereo headphone jack.

SOFTWARE

Price: £30-35.
Cartridge Memory: 8Mb
Existing Software Base: Very small.
Current Releases: *California Games* is a great freebie.
Prospects: Uncertain but several new titles in the pipeline.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: Very few
Maintenance: One year's guarantee.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★★★
Sound: ★★★★★
Expansion: ★
Overall: ★★

ATARI VCS

Package: Both VCS2600 and VCS7800 come with controller and free game.
Processor: 6507 (2600)/6502 (7800)
Console Memory: Not known.
Recommended Retail Price: VCS2600 £39.99; VCS7800 £69.99
Contact: Atari PR 071 388 9871

IN BRIEF

The VCS2600 is a reboxed version of the original Atari console which, until a couple of years ago, remained the best selling home games system of all time. The VCS7800 is a tarted-up version of the VCS2600 with a faster processor, slightly better sound and vastly improved graphics.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 192 x 160 (2600); 320 x 242 (7800)
Palette: 16 (2600)/256 (7800)
Colours: 4 (2600)/16 (7800)
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: No
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: No
Sprites: N/A/64
Speed: Slow

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on TV
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: No
Performance: Limited to 1 channel on 2600 and two on 7800.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Supplied
Ports: 2 x 9 pin D for joysticks; TV; cartridge port.

SOFTWARE

Price: £7-13.
Cartridge Memory: Not known.
Existing Software Base: Small
Current Releases: Rare
Prospects: Unsure in the light of new competition from Japan.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: Worth looking
Maintenance: One year's guarantee.

STAR RATINGS

	2600	7800
Graphics:	★	★★
Sound:	★	★★
Expansion:	None	None
Overall:	★	★★

C64 GAMES SYSTEM

Package: C64GS console, controller and 4 games (*Klax, Fiendish Freddy, Flimbo's Quest* and *International Soccer*).
Processor: 1MHz 6502
Console Memory: 64K
Recommended Retail Price: £99.99
Contact: Commodore 0628 770088

IN BRIEF

Take a Commodore C64 computer, remove the keyboard and stick it in an unattractive slab of a box and what have you got? A "new" console! Sales so far have been less than impressive.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 160 x 200 in multicolour mode.
Palette: 16
Colours: 16
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: Yes
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: RGB
Sprites: 8
Speed: Slow CPU, helped out by the 64's custom graphics and sound chips.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on TV/monitor
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: No
Performance: 3 channel SAM - one of the best 8-bit sound chips.

HARDWARE
Joystick: Joypad supplied.
Ports: None
SOFTWARE
Price: Around £25.
Cartridge Memory: 4Mbits.
Existing Software Base: Potentially huge, but small at the moment. Commodore anticipate around 100 titles by Xmas.
Current Releases: Plenty forthcoming from various software houses.
Prospects: Uncertain. Do people really want a console version of an ageing, though admittedly good, computer? Software support is likely to be pretty good for a while at least.
BUYLINES
Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: None
Maintenance: One year guarantee.

STAR RATINGS
Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★★
Expansion: ★
Overall: ★★

NINTENDO NES

Package: Standard Pack includes console, plus 2 game controllers and *Super Mario Brothers* game. Mutant Machine pack as above but substitutes *Turtles* game for *Mario*. Action Pack as Standard, but includes Zapper gun and *Duck Hunt* game.
Processor: Not known.
Console Memory: 2K.
Recommended Retail Price: Standard Pack £79.95; Deluxe Pack £99.95.
Contact: Deighton PR 071.836 2973

IN BRIEF
The world's largest selling console, largely because of the playability of some of its games rather than its hardware, which is 8-bit average.
GRAPHICS
Resolution: 256 x 240
Palette: 52
Colours: 16
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: No
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: None
Sprites: N/A
Speed: Average
SOUND
Speaker Quality: N/A
Stereo Output: No
Performance: Average
HARDWARE
Joystick: 2 dedicated controllers supplied. IR wireless controllers with 30ft range available for £39.95.
Ports: None out of the ordinary.
SOFTWARE
Price: £20-40.
Cartridge Memory: Not known.
Existing Software Base: Over 50 titles available here. Many more available in Japan but these require a converter to run.
Current Releases: Nintendo predict about 2-3 titles per month.
Prospects: In the UK, improving due to increased support – but this is yesterday's technology.
Software Loading: Instant
BUYLINES
Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: A few.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Faulty machines return to dealer.

STAR RATINGS
Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★
Expansion: ★★★★
Overall: ★★★

NINTENDO GAMEBOY

Package: Main unit with *Tetris* game.
Processor: 1MHz customised 8-bit Z80A.
Console Memory: 16K
Recommended Retail Price: £69.99.
Contact: Deighton PR 071 836 2973

IN BRIEF
Nintendo were the first company to produce a dedicated handheld console and now it seems everyone wants to get in on the act. On reflection even the Game Boy was a long time coming since the technology employed by the display is starting to look dated. Not to be dismissed simply because of mono graphics – this machine has some superb titles and games making use of the two-player link-up option are tremendous fun (esp *Tetris*).
GRAPHICS
Resolution: 20 x 18 characters.
Colours: 4 grey shades.
Monitor Supplied: Yes - LCD display is lit by ambient light.
Sprites: 40 8 x 8 pixels.
Speed: Fast for what it is.
SOUND
Speaker Quality: Depends on headphones.
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: Plays a lot better than it looks.
HARDWARE
Joystick: Built-in 8-way joypad.
Ports: Headphone socket;dual-machine interface.
SOFTWARE
Price: £20-25.
Cartridge Memory: 64K
Existing Software Base: The best for any handheld.
Current Releases: Increasing
Prospects: Excellent

BUYLINES
Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: None.
Maintenance: One year's warranty
STAR RATINGS
Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★★★
Expansion: Dual machine interface has lots of potential.
Overall: ★★★★★

NEC PC ENGINE

Package: Console unit, controller and free game
Processor: Customised 8-bit.
Console Memory: 64K internal, 8K video. (Turbographx: 128K internal, 32K video.)
Recommended Retail Price: N/A (US price around $199)
Contact: Local dealers

IN BRIEF
Sadly, it now seems unlikely that this machine will ever be officially supported by NEC in the UK. Its CD-ROM add-on drive is now the largest selling CD unit on the market and is responsible for much of the recent increase in CD development. There's also a 16-bit version, vastly more powerful, called the Turbographx, but this is only rarely available through importers and at a price – usually around £300. NEC also have a handheld version of the Engine which is software compatible with its larger brother.
GRAPHICS
Resolution: 256 x 216
Palette: 512 (Turbographx: 1024)
Colours: 32 - 16 background and 16 shared by sprites.
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: N/A
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: N/A
Sprites: 64 (Turbographx: 128)
Speed: Very fast considering this is an 8-bit!
SOUND
Speaker Quality: Depends on monitor.
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 6-channel stereo
HARDWARE
Disk Format: CD ROM at extra cost.
Disk Price: Read-only so N/A
Disk Performance: Superb - the CD ROM adds a new dimension.
Joystick: Supplied with dedicated controller.
SOFTWARE
Price: Around £25-40 imported.
Cartridge Memory: Not known.
Existing Software Base: Large
Current Releases: Increasing.
Prospects: Good.
BUYLINES
Best Buy Price: Grey import.
Second Hand Availability: V Rare
Maintenance: Watch out - grey imported machines rarely have any real warranty.
STAR RATINGS
Graphics: ★★★★
Sound: ★★★★
Expansion: ★★★★
Overall: ★★★★

SEGA MASTER

Package: Console using cartridge or smart card plus game controller and *Alex Kidd in Miracle World* game.
Recommended Retail Price: £79.99; £99.95 (+ light gun); £129.95 (+ light gun and 3D glasses).
Processor: Z80.
Console Memory: 32K.
Contact: Virgin Mastertronic 071 727 8070

IN BRIEF
Japanese software base is not as good as Nintendo's but more titles reach UK. Mastertronic have given good support to the machine so the prospects look good. Like the Nintendo, however, this 8-bit machine uses established but dated technology.
GRAPHICS
Resolution: 256 x 192
Palette: 64
Colours: 16
TV: Yes
Monitor: No
SOUND
Speaker Quality: Depends on TV.
Performance: 3 channels.
HARDWARE
Joystick: Game controller supplied.
SOFTWARE
Price: £10-40 (typically £25)
Cartridge Memory: Not known.
Existing Software Base: Very good.
Current Releases: Good
Prospects: As good as any 8-bit console.
BUYLINES
Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: Some
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Faulty machines return to dealer.

STAR RATINGS
Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★★
Expansion: ★★★
Overall: ★★★

SEGA MEGADRIVE

Package: Console unit, controller, and *Altered Beast* game.
Processor: 68000 + Z80B support.
Console Memory: 74K main, 64K video.
Recommended Retail Price: £189.99.
Contact: Virgin Mastertronic 071 727 8070

IN BRIEF
Excellent example of the new 16-bit console technologies. The first decent 16-bit console to receive official support in the UK.
GRAPHICS
Resolution: 320 x 224
Palette: 512
Colours: 64
TV: Yes
Monitor: No
Sprites: 80
Speed: Very fast
SOUND
Speaker Quality: N/A
MIDI: No

Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 12 channel stereo sound is produced by a custom FM chip and sounds fantastic.

HARDWARE
Joystick: Dedicated controller supplied.

SOFTWARE
Price: £30-50 (typically £35).
Cartridge Memory: Not known.
Existing Software Base: Good
Current Releases: Few in UK at present
Prospects: Very good.

BUYLINES
Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: N/A
Maintenance: One year on UK machines.

STAR RATINGS
Graphics: ★★★★★
Sound: ★★★★★
Expansion: ★★★
Overall: ★★★★★

SNK NEO-GEO

Package: Console unit, controller unit and memory card (can store 27 games scores).
Processor: 12MHz 68000 + 4MHz Z80A support.
Console Memory: 64K work RAM, 64K video RAM.
Recommended Retail Price: £399
Contact: Active Sales 081 752 0260

IN BRIEF
Technically the most advanced console currently available, the games are of arcade quality, with huge sprites and excellent sound, although the gameplay is a little lacking in the current crop of titles. The game cartridges can store up to 330 Mbits of data, but this is reflected in their price - £199.99! All is not lost, since Active Sales have launched a club where members can rent software for £25 a month. Definitely the system to have if you want to pose, and to be very poor!

GRAPHICS
Resolution: Arcade quality.
Palette: 65536
Colours: 4096
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: Yes
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: RGB, SCART
Sprites: 380
Speed: Remarkable

SOUND
Speaker Quality: Depends on TV/monitor
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 13 channel stereo.

HARDWARE
Joystick: Supplied, second available for around £70.
Ports: Walkman socket

SOFTWARE
Price: £200.
Cartridge Memory: 330 Mbits.
Existing Software Base: Small.
Current Releases: 12 planned by the end of the year.
Prospects: Uncertain, but the members' club could help swing chance in its favour.

BUYLINES
Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: None as yet.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee.

STAR RATINGS
Graphics: ★★★★★
Sound: ★★★★★
Expansion: ★
Overall: ★★★★

SUPER FAMICOM

Package: Console unit, controller unit and *Super Marioland*.
Processor: Custom-built 16-bit.
Console Memory: Not known
Recommended Retail Price: N/A (Japan price = £100)
Contact: Local dealers

IN BRIEF
Just this time, believe the hype. Although not hugely superior to the Megadrive technically (although the improvements ARE noticeable), it's the games that impress - with *Mario* being one of the best games ever!

GRAPHICS
Resolution: 2048 x 256 max.
Palette: 32,768
Colours: 256
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: Yes
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: RGB, SCART
Sprites: Not known but lots!
Speed: Remarkable

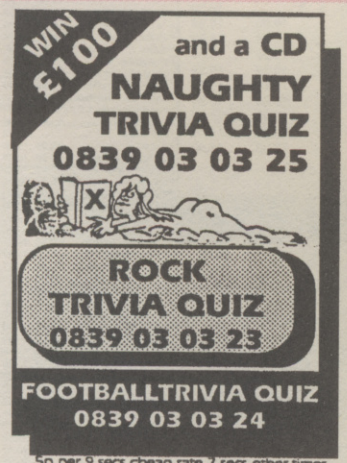
SOUND
Speaker Quality: Depends on TV/monitor
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: Custom 16-bit PCM/digital.

HARDWARE
Joystick: Supplied.
Ports: One big expansion port.

SOFTWARE
Price: £40-50.
Cartridge Memory: Not known.
Existing Software Base: Small.
Current Releases: Lots, and plenty more planned.
Prospects: How can it fail? Back orders were in the millions before it was launched.

BUYLINES
Best Buy Price: Grey import.
Second Hand Availability: None as yet.
Maintenance: Take care- grey imports are rarely under warranty.

STAR RATINGS
Graphics: ★★★★★
Sound: ★★★★★
Expansion: ★★★★
Overall: ★★★★★



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Models: Archimedes 310, 3000, 410 420, 440
Package: keyboard, mouse and drive: keyboard mouse and drive plus monitor (colour or mono);
Memory: 3000 512K; 310 1Mb; 410 1Mb; 420 2Mb; 440 4Mb
Processor: Acorn ARM
RRP: Prices range from £789.97 for A3000 alone to £2644.60 for A440 with colour monitor
Contact: Acorn 0223 245200

IN BRIEF

Still the cutting edge of micro technology. Acorn's ARM is about the fastest thing this side of a Cray. This very exciting machine – although gathering admirers since the introduction of the A3000 – still lacks a good games software base and is best left to the enthusiast.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 320 x 256 or 640 x 256 with normal monitors. 640 x 512 available with multi-sync monitors.
Palette: 4096
Colours: From mono up to 256 (320 x 256) or 16 (640 x 512).
TV: No
Monitor Output: Mono composite video: colour – RGB + sync.
Monitor Supplied: Depends on package bought.
Monitor Options: Acorn dedicated 14 inch medium res. colour; 12 inch high res mono; Multi-sync colour.
Sprites: 1
Speed: Blistering.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Good
MIDI: With extra hardware.
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 16 channels (8 stereo pairs); 6 octaves, 1 internal speaker.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5 inch – 800K
Disk Price: From £1.20 upwards.
Disk Performance: Good and fast.
Keyboard: 103 keys with programmable auto-repeat. Early keyboards have a cheap feel given the quality of the machine.
Joystick/Mouse: 3 button mouse; n support for joysticks.
Interfaces: 25 pin D parallel; 9 piN mouse; 3.5mm stereo headphone jack; 64 way din; 41612 expansion port; IEC 320 video outlet; I/O interface.

SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Still very limited. Some games available most software is for productivity and business.
Current Releases: See above.
Games: Most famous are *Zarch (Virus)* and *Conqueror*. But there have been several impressive one-off titles released recently.
Graphics: Potential is enormous. Some excellent packages available
Music: Like graphics, but developers remain shy.
Prospects: Limited. Even the cheaper models find it tough competing with STs and Amigas.
Software Loading: Very reliable.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: Still scarce, some 305 and 310s starting to appear but expect to pay for them.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Return to faulty machines dealer.
Models: Classic, SE/30, LC, IIsi

ACORN ARCHIMEDES

Package: Monitor with built-in CPU and disk drive, separate keyboard.
Memory: 1Mb (Classic 1), 2Mb (Classic 2, SE/30, LC & IIsi), 5Mb (IIsi)
Processor: Motorola 68000 (SE/30); 68020 (LC), 68030 (SE/30, IIsi)
Recommended Retail Price: Classic 1 £575; Classic 2 £895; SE/30 £2395+ (inc 40Mb hard disc); LC £1235 (inc 40Mb hard disc); IIsi £2295 (2Mb+ 40Mb hard disc); £2645 (5Mb+40Mb hard disc); £2995 (5Mb+80Mb) (all ex VAT)
Contact: Apple 081-569-1199

IN BRIEF

A very expensive up-market machine for those keen on desktop publishing, WIMP systems and top-of-the-range software. Release of the Classic range an exciting move for wannabe Mac owners. Software is very expensive. Quite a few games in the US, but few over here. Good for MIDI musicians but be prepared to pay through the nose for software.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: Classic & SE 512 x 342; LC 640 x 480; IIsi 640 x 480 (colour) & 640 x 870 (grey).
Palette: Classic & SE are black and white; LC 256; IIsi 256 or 16 greys in max res.
Colours: 256 with colour monitor
TV: No
Monitor Output: Integral monitor.
Monitor Supplied: Yes
Monitor Options: Hi-res mono & colour available for LC & IIsi.
Sprites: None
Speed: Classic 1 okay; Classic 2, SE/30 & LC reasonably fast; IIsi very fast.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Good
MIDI: Third party interfaces available.
Stereo Output: IIsi yes; rest no.
Performance: 4 channels give good performance.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5 inch – 1.44Mb
Disk Price: £1.50 – £2.00
Disk Performance: Generally fast
Keyboard: Separate with 81 keys including function keys and numeric key pad. Optional extra is the Apple Extended keyboard with 105 keys.
Joystick/Mouse: Joystick is not supported; high-quality single button mouse is supplied with machine.
Interfaces: SE/30 – Apple Desktop Bus connector. 2 RS232/RS422 serial; external disk drive; 96-pin Euro-Din expansion slot; SCSI – DB-25 connector; external audio amplifier. IIsi – 2 RS232/RS422 serial; DB-25 SCSI T.

SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: A very wide base exists in all fields except games.
Current Releases: Adequate, though largely of US origin and in the business or DTP field.
Games: Very few arcade titles but plenty of icon driven adventures.
Graphics: Lots of interesting software for those interested in DIY publishing.
Music: Very well supported for MIDI software – but it's expensive to boot.
Prospects: As always, excellent – especially in business and DTP.
Software Loading: Quick, reliable.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Generally the RRP – Macs are only sold through dealerships. Ask for a discount for cash.
Second Hand Availability: Scarce and expensive. A better market exists in older models but these are best avoided.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Apple offers Applecare – "insurance" you take out to cover the cost of repairs after the guarantee has run out.

ATARI ST

Models: Atari 520STFM; 520STE; 1040STE; Mega STs; Stacy
Package: 520 and 1040 have keyboard with built-in disk drive; Mega versions have separate keyboard. Power Pack includes 520STE with light gun, joystick and £400 of "free" software. "Discovery" pack includes similar value software to Power pack but with an STFM and an educational bent.
Memory: 520STFM and 520STE 512K; 1040STE 1Mb; Mega ST 1, 2 or 4Mb; Stacy 2 or 4Mb. STE machines expand internally to 4Mb.
Processor: Motorola 68000
Recommended Retail Price: 520STE (Power Pack) £399; 520STFM (Discovery Pack) £299; 1040STE £499; Stacy N/A
Contact: Atari 0753 33344

IN BRIEF

Excellent as a general purpose home machine for games, small business and productivity. It's the number one choice for MIDI musicians. The ST's price still gives it a slight edge over the graphically more advanced Amiga. The new baby ST – Stacy – is tipped by Atari to be the musician's portable since it is a complete 2Mb or 4Mb ST with hard disk and mono monitor in a small box.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: Low-res 320 x 200; medium res 640 x 200; high-res 640 x 400
Palette: STFM 512; STE 4096; Stacy 2
Colours: Black and white in high-res; 4 colours in medium-res; 16 in low-res.
TV: Yes. Not Stacy.
Monitor Output: STFM models only, others through TV modulator
Monitor Supplied: No; Stacy has integral LCD monitor
Monitor Options: Atari monitors SM124 high-res mono; SC1442 med res colour.
Sprites: 1
Speed: Fast
NB *High resolution display is only available on monochrome monitor;*

medium and low res displays only available on colour monitors or TVs. Blitter fitted to late STFMs (standard on STE) improves the GEM access.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on monitor.
MIDI: Yes
Stereo Output: STE only.
Performance: 3 channel sound is average to good depending on software. STE features 8 bit PCM sound but no current software uses it.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5 inch – 720K
Disk Price: £1.20 to £1.50
Disk Performance: Reliable and fast. Early machines were supplied with a single-sided disk drive.
Keyboard: 96 keys including 10 functions keys. Has a cheap feel which can be improved with third party spring kits.
Joystick/Mouse: 2 Joystick ports are standard; 2 button mouse is supplied with machine. Stacy is supplied with a trackball.

SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Excellent. A few budget titles are starting to appear now.
Current Releases: None of the major software houses ignore the ST so it is well served with plenty of good software.
Games: Across the board.
Graphics: Good with some excellent software to manipulate them.
Music: Excellent. Plenty of sound samplers, editors and MIDI software make this the musician's choice.
Prospects: Very good, but the Amiga is currently the favourite with software houses in the UK and the ST has failed to capture a market in the States.
Software Loading: Several software companies now supply their games on one double-sided disc, often using the second side for extra graphics or sound, meaning single-sided disc owners either miss out on some of the frills, or even worse have to send off for two single-sided discs. The alternative two single-sided discs entail tedious disc swapping - which is equally annoying newer owners.

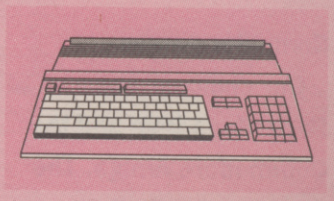
BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP. Watch out for the twice yearly bundles.
Second Hand Availability: Very common and quite cheap. STs do not hold their value well – beware very old, single sided machines.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Return to dealer if faulty.

AMIGA

Models: Amiga A500; A1500; A2000; A3000
Package: A500 has keyboard and built-in drive with separate PSU; A1500 and A2000 have separate keyboard with built-in (fan assisted) PSU. A3000 is a very powerful machine indeed.
Memory: A500 512K; A1500 & A2000 1Mb; A3000
Processor: 500/1500/2000 Motorola 68000; A3000 68030, 16 or 25MHz
Recommended Retail Price: A500 £NA; Screen Gems £399.99; Flight of Fantasy Pack £399.99; Class Of The 90s pack £579.99 (all packs inc A500); A1500 from £999; A2000 from £1199(for 1Mb+20Mb hard disk); A3000 from £3160(for 2Mb+40Mb hard disk). (All prices inc VAT).
Contact: Commodore 0628 770088

IN BRIEF



A stunning specification with custom chips to rival almost everything around, the Amiga is the first choice for the most exigent of games players and video professionals. After an initially shaky start the machine continues to sell extremely well and has overtaken the ST in the UK, though the latter machine still has a slightly larger installed base. The A1500 is near-identical spec-wise to the A2000, but cheaper. The A3000 is a top-end workstation substitute; includes *Workbench 2*, featuring enhanced icons, file handling, and security features plus *Amiga Vision*, a multi-media programming tool. A3000 also comes in three configurations, ranging from a 16MHz/40Mb hard disk to a 25MHz/100Mb disc.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: From 320 x 200 to 640 x 400 (more possible in software)
Palette: 4096
Colours: 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 or 4096
TV: With modulator.
Monitor Output: SCART + composite video in monochrome.
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: C1084 £349.99
Sprites: 16 in hardware + unlimited BOBS from soft/hardware.
Speed: Very fast with good software.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on monitor.
MIDI: No. Third party interfaces available.
Stereo Output: 2 phono connectors.
Performance: Among the best around. Custom hardware squeezes 9 octaves of 8-bit digital sound into the four channels.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5inch – 837K; A3000 40/100Mbyte hard disk formatted.
Disk Price: £1.20 – £2.00
Disk Performance: Noisy and sluggish. Third party software is available to improve matters.
Keyboard: 94 keys. 10 function keys and separate cursor cluster.
Joystick/Mouse: 2 button mouse supplied as standard.
Interfaces: Two Joystick/mouse; stereo audio; external disk drive(s); RS232 serial; Centronics parallel printer; SCART RGB/video; composite monochrome video; expansion bus (internal on A1500 & A2000; 32-bit on A3000); clock/memory expansion on A500 only; internal PC expansion on A1500, A2000 and A3000.

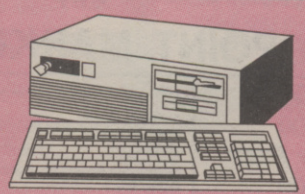
SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Similar to the ST.
Current Releases: Everyone's doing them.
Games: Something for everyone.
Graphics: Quality and range is unsurpassed.
Music: Needs better support for MIDI. Internal sound software is well supported thanks to IFF standards.
Prospects: Excellent.
Software Loading: Noisy but usually reliable. Plagued by viruses.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Old Amiga 1000s can be picked up cheaply enough but these lacked the extra graphics modes of later models. Try to find a good value pack.
Second Hand Availability: Becoming common. Best buys are late Amiga 500s with Kickstart 1.2.
Maintenance: One years guarantee. Return faulty machines to dealers.

IBM PC



Model: IBM's PC was the first PC to be accepted in large quantities (not the first PC) and remains the standard by which all others are judged. There are hundreds of clones and variations including offerings from Amstrad, Atari and Commodore. In general, with PCs you pay for speed and better graphics standards. The extra money is worth it if you can afford it.
Package: Depends on the manufacturer although most are supplied with monitors. They can even be bought in kit form at no extra saving
Memory: Usually 512K or 640K. Can be anything from 64K to 1Mb+. Always go for a 640K model.
Processor: Intel 8088/8086 in base machine is sometimes replaces with the faster NEC V20/30. More expensive machines are based on Intel's much faster 286, 386SX, 386 and even the latest 486.
Recommended Retail Price: Can be picked up for as little as £299 for a "no frills" machine. With top-of-the-range 486 based clones – and the official IBM versions – the sky's the limit. Look for a good EGA or VGA model for between £750 and £1200.

IN BRIEF

Superb value if you want the ultimate all-rounder, the PC still betrays its business origins. Almost every major software house now port their titles to the PC but these remain limited by the constraints of the basic (most common) machines – which means they tend to be limited in sound and graphics. Definitely NOT first choice if entertainment is your preferred use for computers, or if you cannot afford the better EGA or VGA models (which are really essential for good games playing).

GRAPHICS

The first PCs weren't fitted with graphics as standard but most clones incorporate the necessary hardware and come with a monitor. There are three main standards: CGA – a nasty but all to common colour display, EGA about the lowest colour display worth considering, VGA - an Amiga/ST beating display; and Hercules monochrome. EGA or VGA which are usually only fitted as standard to more expensive machines (Amstrad's PC2086 is one exception).
Resolution: CGA 320 x 200; EGA 640 x 350; Hercules 720 x 384; VGA 800 x 600.
Palette: CGA 8 (in two fixed sets); EGA 64; VGA 256
Colours: CGA 4; EGA 16; VGA 64; Hercules 2
Monitor Output: TTL RGB/RGBI (CGA); analogue RGB (E/VGA)
Monitor Options: Vast. Many monitors are dedicated to just one or two modes – some have amber, green or white monochrome displays – check before buying.
Sprites: None
Speed: From very slow - 8088 - to very fast - 80486

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Built-in sound is very poor. Third-party add-on sound boards such Roland (£380) and Ad-Lib (£150) - which is fast becoming a standard - provide synthesiser-quality sound through an amplifier.
MIDI: Third part interfaces available.
Stereo Output: With boards, yes.
Performance: Not the ideal machine for the musically bent – an Atari ST offers more for MIDI, the Amiga more for software sound purists.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 5.25in –180/360K/1.2Mb; 3.5in 720K/1.44Mb
Disk Price: 60p – £3.00
Disk Performance: Average. Most PC owners also buy hard disks. A large amount of PC applications software refuses to work unless you

have a hard disk.
Keyboard: Almost as many variations as there are clones. Prefer the AT or extended AT layouts to the XT layout since it easier to use.
Joystick/Mouse: Neither supplied as standard. The better clones include a mouse or at least a mouse port, especially since IBM's WIMP system (*Windows*) has become more popular.

SOFTWARE
Existing Software Base: Vast!
Current Releases: All major software houses now produce something for the PC , with many now supporting the superior E/VGA modes.
Games: Most of the best Amiga /ST titles appear on the PC eventually.
Graphics: Given the right graphics adaptor, the PC has nice graphics and the software is usually excellent. On a standard CGA PC the graphics stink no matter how good the software is.
Music: Unexpanded it's pathetic. However, add-on boards offer some of the best sound you'll hear on a home computer.
Prospects: The PC is the eternal champion – as others fall by the wayside it carries on getting faster and better all the time. This is aided by Intel constantly improving the machine's processor and the vast user base demanding better equipment.
Software Loading: Fast and reliable; very fast from hard disk.

BUYLINES
Best Buy Price: Watch out for package deals form large chains and mail order companies. If you don't know too much about PCs go for a name you know.
Second Hand Availability: Common but be careful you do not get a clapped out monitor/keyboard.
Maintenance: Usually one year's guarantee – but competition has forced the price of maintenance contracts down to an affordable level. This often means they fix in-situ free.

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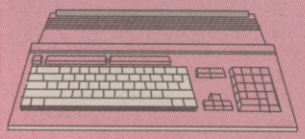

So, there you have it, the facts in full. Now all you have to do is decide which is the best machine for you. We at ACE reckon that these days, if you can afford it, you really need both a console AND a computer to cover all the bases of Advanced Computer games.

Our choices? The Sega Megadrive and the Commodore Amiga. The Famicom is a better machine than the Megadrive but it's official unavailability in the UK means that it's a bit of a dark horse at the moment.

But not all of us (any of us?) can afford to fork out the smackeroos for two machines, in which case our recommendation is to plump for the Amiga - it's a great all-rounder with some superb software available for it.

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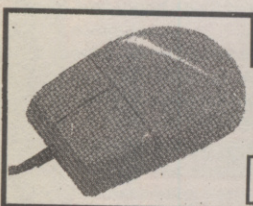

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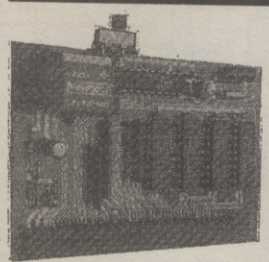

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DIRECT LINE

To YOUR micro...

Monthly machine specific columns for the users of the ten most popular machines, written from a personal viewpoint by other users...

MEGADRIVE

Sega were understandably patting themselves on the back last week as figures came through for confirmed Megadrive sales. In 1990, 60,000 Megadrives were sold in the UK alone, bolstered, no doubt, by 89's Master system owners who were keen on the Sega brand and keen to upgrade to the finer graphic capabilities of the 16-bit machine.

In total, Sega claim to have shifted 193,000 Megadrives since its launch last year.

For the machine to have had such success must surely brand the Megadrive as the machine-to-own - for the moment.The combined might of the Master and Megadrive would seem to have fended off the advances of the advances of Nintendo's Entertainment System.

And with no UK release date set for the Super Famicom, it would appear that Sega have the best handhold in Europe.Indeed, a couple of weeks ago at the industry conference in Marbella, Sega was awarded the Industry Rising Star tag.

However, it seems that some of the buzz has gone out of the Megadrive of late, with Grey Import Famicom's stealing some of its thunder. It's worth remembering that the software support for the Famicom, at the moment, is far from extensive. Aside from *Mario 4*, supplied free with the package, and a few other notable exceptions (*Pilot Wings, F0*) there really isn't enough software of a high enough quality to warrant the purchase of the machine. Yet.

...STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP...

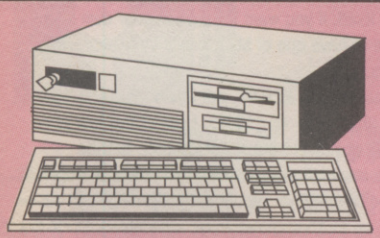
***POPULOUS* CONVERSION!**

Just as we were closing for press, the Megadrive version of *Populous* skittled in for review. Look out for some colour shots elsewhere in the issue! From the brief look we've managed to snatch so far - as the printers were dragging the pages away - it look's like a top-notch conversion from E.A.

After the rather poor job they did of *Zany Golf*, looking uncomfortably like an Amiga port, with little thought being given to control method (the hand controller acting exactly like a mouse - and not doing a very good job of it.) we were concerned that this latest classic wouldn't live up to expectations.

Well, fortune and good programming has smiled and we're pleased to report that the Megadrive version of the hit game of World domination could even be the best yet!

IBM PC



Of late multimedia seems to be the subject of talk buzzing around the lips of many PC entertainment software developers. Strip away all the blather and multimedia boils down to an entertainment/ education software system taking full advantage some audio/video techtrickery hooked up to a mass storage device, very usually a CD ROM drive. The reason software developers are getting so excited about is that multimedia software is the sort of thing you can get anybody interested. Not just computer tech heads, not just wide eyed game freaks, any Joe Sixpack or Jenny Sewingmachine that walks into Dixons with a few pennies to spend.

It's all down to the memorytastic amount of information you pack onto CD Rom type optical storage devices. Instead of a couple of nice digitised pictures on the title screen and pixely looking sprites throughout the rest of a game, it's wholly possible to have plenty, literally thousands, of stunning graphics. Instead of a few parpy peeps to make up the games sound, full stereo CD quality samples can accompany anything you do. With the 550MB an average CD-ROM disc can hold there's no problem of jamming everything 5 and a quarter inch floppies.

Best of all, the technologies all available right this moment and at extremely reasonable prices. Intel's recently launched i750 DVI chip set can easily deliver the awesome amount of proccesor grunt needed to create highly complex TV speed animation. Funnily enough it's available as a PC board. CD-ROM's been around for a fair while, mostly used for entertainment and utility software. Tandy has just announced a fully fledged CD-ROM system for just $399 (transatlantic maths translates that to the £230 ballpark). Funnily enough Tandy have sectored the PC market as there major buyer. It all adds up to the PC being the most pragmatic choice for anyone looking for a mess around in multimedia. So if this stuff's all available right now, why aren't we all

THE SOFTWARE

The software to take advantage of these wonderful boxes of tricks has just failed to materialize and the reason why? Standards, or rather lack of them. There's no one standard platform for this type of computer entertainment to be run on. Luckily things are looking up. Microsoft have announced plans to fully support a large number of multimedia graphics and storage devices to be supported in their next release of *Windows*. That should be due in the summer of this year.

Also Sony and Nintendo and collaborating on a proposed standard that encompasses multimedia in entertainment computing based around a highly powerful video chip set that could easily appear in the form of a PC plug in board. Micropose are just about to announce a proposed set of guidelines for the standardization of CD-ROM based multimedia software, with the PC at it's centre. Obviously there's a fair bit for the big boys to slug out before a solid standard has been decided upon. But it's happening.

BUT WHAT OF THE GAMES?

But will it mean better games? Certain sitcoms seem to chuck in canned laughter instead of jokes and it's a worry that some publishers games will grow in terms of presentation rather than content. The switch from entertainment software as we know it now to that of the future is very large one and developing the new techniques needed for this type of coding will definitely mean a few stumbled steps. Even so they are steps in the right direction.

COMPETITION!

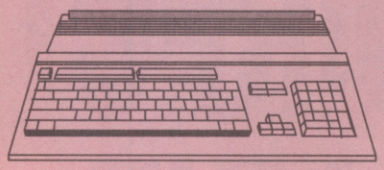
Just room for a final compo to round off with this month. The first entrry out of the hat will receive five pieces of PC software of our choosing.

Send your entries to the normal address.

The question:
What does VGA stand for?
See you next time!

● JENNY TAYLOR

AMIGA



Budget software has always been a bit of a curate's egg. Until recently, the major players in the market have been skirting around the Budget market without necessarily committing. Sure, most companies have thrown out a few re-releases, but there's been a certain amount of reluctance to take the bull by the horns.

Virgin Mastertronic, however, have taken a very different view of the Amiga Budget scene and have launched into the market with a handful of critically acclaimed titles. Admittedly from their own back catalogue, the games cater for virtually every style of gamer. The Infocom adventures, once £40 giants available to a select few PC owners can now be enjoyed on the Amiga for a mere £7.

LOVE 'ER IN LEATHER

The Infocom range presents adventurers with a wide range of plotlines. There's *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*, for example, offering players a comic-book style romp through a game populated by domineering Space Amazons. The action can get pretty steamy, and you can even select the level of sauciness in the descriptions of each scene and action. (The original game featured a scratch and sniff card, perhaps thankfully omitted from the budget version).

SMOOTH AS *SILKWORM*

Arcade fanatics can find all the blasting they could possibly want in three of the best games to appear on the Amiga in recent years, all now available at this knock-down rate. *Silkworm*, from the Sales Curve features excellent two-player action. One player controls a jeep and the other a helicopter in a left-to-right scrolling blast. You're attacked by wave after wave of enemy craft, some forming into enormous flying fortresses in the air!

IT'S A GAS

Xenon, from the Bitmap Bros was rated by many magazines as their game of the month when it first appeared in 1987. Unlike many other shoot-em-ups, *Xenon* enables the player to change from an airborne space-fighter into a ground-going battle tank. Each faces particular obstacles and can be powered-up to a super-craft. Perhaps a little slow by today's frenetic standards, *Xenon* was a genuine breakthrough at the time and should be part of every discerning Amiga owner's catalogue.

So, it makes a nice change for Amiga owners perhaps second in line to PC gamers in the most-expensive software stakes, to be able to play decent games and still have change from a tenner. Good job.

VIDEO VIEW

Ever wished you could harness the power of your Amiga and put it to good use for uses other than games? More and more hardware and utilities packages are emerging recently.

It's important to distinguish between *useful* packages which actually have some benefit based in realistic entertainment purposes rather than glorified science kits which measure the moisture levels in your daffodils' earth.

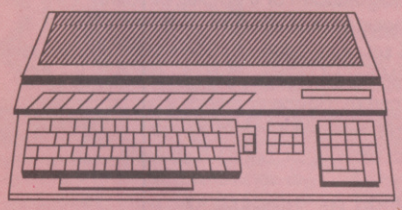
Video Editing systems area prime example of the former type. Using Amiga systems you can now edit, caption and title your own video productions. So, instead of having to write the title of the program on the box and include the rubbishy BBC2 announcement so you can tell what's on the tape, you can produce a menu screen cataloguing what's on the tape, at what counter position.

Those brave enough to create their own video masterpieces, can add that professional touch touch with decent lead-ins. Your holiday in Marbella can now be properly announced thanks to your Amiga.

Once particularly decent piece of kit for producing titles is the Videostudio from ZVP. It enables you to produce 3D animated titles to a pretty professional standard.

● **Jim Douglas**

ATARI ST



It's hard to keep up with Microdeal's outpouring of music products for the ST; it seems that you've just finished reviewing one sampler or music arranger when there's another one on the market.

The latest releases are ***Quartet V1.5***, an update of the 4-channel "sample sequencer", and ***Playback,*** a sound output cartridge which gives the ST, STF and STFM the stereo capabilities of the STE.

Quartet V1.5 is a must-have if you lament the ST's musical inferiority when compared to the Amiga. At the normal price of £49.95 it's reasonable, but at the introductory offer price of £24.95 it's unmissable.

Running on any ST without the need for additional hardware, it's very much intended to give the ST the same sort of sample-sequencing abilities as the Amiga, offering four sampled voices (which can be chosen from the 100-sound library provided, or imported from Microdeal's Replay or other popular samplers).

Since the samples are replayed at up to 16Khz, quality is good; you can listen to the sounds through a TV, monitor, or ideally a Replay cartridge. Sample processing software lets you loop, filter or repeat samples before adding them to the 20-voice library which is available for each Quartet composition (these can be saved as Voice Sets).

Quartet's main display has a conventional musical stave on which you can enter notes by selecting their value from a menu box, clicking on the required screen position, and sliding to the correct pitch. This is a tedious and repetitive process, but you can enter notes much faster directly from a MIDI keyboard.

You can test the music for an individual voice or for the whole composition, and once you have the basic composition laid down, you can add to it by inserting voice change messages, loop points (which can be "nested" up to 100 times so you have loops within loops), note links, slides, transpositions and so on.

The results can sound very professional with a little patience, and the package includes routines which allow you to include Quartet compositions in your own programs written in assembler, Basic or C, so Quartet is just as suitable as a development tool as it is for mucking around entertaining yourself!

Version 1.5 allows STE owners to output through the stereo ports simply by pressing F5. Voices 1 and 2 go through the left channel, voices 3 and 4 through the right. For ST, STF and STFM owners, pressing F4 will route output through the Playback stereo cartridge. Ä If you already have Quartet V1, you can upgrade to the double-sided V1.5 disk, which includes the new program, more demo music and samples, for £3. If you want to upgrade to the new versions of all three Quartet disks, which again have extra demos and samples on side 2, it will cost £6 - and don't forget to return your original disks to Microdeal.

The other new product, Playback, is an unassuming-looking grey box which plugs into the cartridge port, and has two phono socket outputs which allow you to connect it to an external amplifier. It's compatible with ***Quartet, Replay VIII, Replay Professional*** and ***MasterSound II*** software, adding stereo capability to what were mono samplers. But remember it's not a sampler itself; if you want to digitise your own sounds, you have to have one of Microdeal's other hardware samplers.

Normal price is £29.95, but again there's an introductory offer price of £19.95. Even at this low price you might not think it worth the bother, but the Playback package also includes Drumbeat, a sophisticated 2-channel drum sequencer program which allows "kits" of up to 15 samples to be assembled. Up to 50 drum patterns can be composed and held in memory at once, then assembled into 10 songs, each of up to 99 steps. You can alter timing values and insert triplets, and control tempo internally or from an external MIDI clock, which makes Drumbeat a good alternative to a cheap MIDI drum machine.

In the package you also get a ***Quartet Demo Driver,*** which allows you to combine your own Quartet compositions, graphic displays and scrolling messages (in colour or hi-res mono modes). Lastly, the package includes stereo output drivers written in HiSoft Basic, GFA Basic, STOS and machine code, so you can incorporate stereo sound in your own programs.

Since Microdeal are encouraging ST software developers to make their programs Playback compatible, and public domain libraries are supporting Quartet with additional tunes and samples, it looks as if nothing can stop Microdeal's domination of the ST amateur music market. Well played!

Microdeal, PO Box 68, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4YB, Tel. 0726 68020.

●**Chris Jenkins**

PC ENGINE

This month has seen a lot of new releases for the PC Engine. They include *Murder Mystery Club, Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego,* and *Rainbow Islands* on CD ROM. On card we have a new tennis game called *Final Match Tennis* featuring all the famous tennis players of the decade. We also have a blaster called *Dead Moon,* which is an excellent shoot em' up, and *Motoroader II* (an overhead car racing type game).

The original *Motoroader* was one of the most addictive racing games ever and now the sequel is following in the original's footsteps. The game itself is set in the future and is similar to *BadLands* in that you can destroy your fellow competitors with missiles and other weaponry.

Finally this month we've got Parasol Stars – if you want to know if it's any good. I can safely say that the game has been well worth the wait. Much in the mould of the other two games in the Bubble Bobble series, it has you fighting the evil Baron with some tremendous graphics (the goodies and baddies are really cute). The sound FX and music really portray the mood of the game, and the gameplay is nothing less than 1st class. I recommend that you put this game on the top of your game list.

CD ROM RELEASES.

Back to the CD ROM releases, the first game *Murder Mystery Club* is a puzzle, Cluedo type game in which you try and find the perpetrator of a murder. Every so often you get a puzzle which you have to try and solve from the clues you've uncovered while questioning a suspect. If you fail to solve the puzzle, it's game over for you. If you have a CD ROM drive this is worth a look if you're craving a bit more exercise for the grey cells than the average shoot-em-up.

The other CD ROM game, as I mentioned earlier is *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego.* This game is for the younger owner and is converted from the Macintosh game of the same name. You again play a detective searching the world for clues to solve the case of the missing treasures. The game combines the elements of a graphical adventure with trivia games. I would recommend this game for the younger player, as the emphasis tends to fall on education rather than adrenalin.

Finally on CD ROM we have Rainbow Islands. Rainbow Islands is the missing link between Bubble Bobble and Parasol Stars. The game is as good if not a bit better than Parasol Stars, as the graphics in it are arcade perfect. No wonder this is a CD ROM. If you're lucky enough to own a CD ROM this is the best release since Street Fighter. A must.

Meanwhile, we can report from the CD ROM conference in San Jose, California that ICOM's Sherlock Holmes game is now readily available on CD-ROM, though copies in the UK are hard to find. The game offers full animation of 'mini-scenes' throughout the game with synchronised speech and superb graphics. Although it's yet another detective scenario, don't let that put you off. Watch out for it!

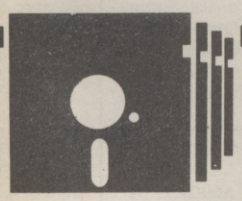
FORTHCOMING CARDS TO LOOK OUT FOR.

Forthcoming games soon to be released on the Engine on card include *Galaxy Force II,* and (one I've been waiting for) *Populous.* Other cards which are in the middle of development are *Lemmings, Impossamole* and *PowerMonger.* These all promise to be extremely strong titles – Lemmings most readers will already know on other formats; Impossamole we've seen in development at Gremlin and it looks very promising with some slick arcade gameplay and cutesy graphics. PowerMonger should be a winner if it's comparable to the other versions of this superlative game.

Worth noting also is that on CD we'll soon be having Manhole, a truly interactive adventure game which, like Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego, is a Macintosh conversion. Manhole was devised by Cyan, who later went on to produce the famous Cosmic Osmo game for the Mac. Although great fun, Manhole is clearly aimed at a slightly younger audience than Osmo, but it's great fun nevertheless.

Also we'll be having *It Came From the Desert* (after months of delay), and a shoot em' up called *Hellfire* which was released a few months back for the Megadrive. It'll be interesting to see how the NEC version compares with the Sega one. Finally for the Super Grafx we should soon be seeing 1941 or 1943. I'm not quite sure which one it'll be but for Super Grafx owners it should be a welcome release even if it is a conversion of an aging shoot em' up.

● Gareth Harper



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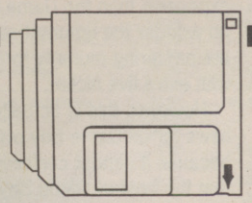

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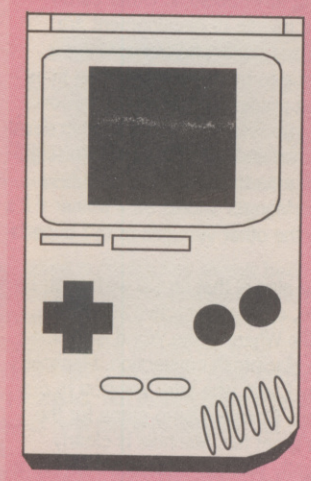

What do you think is the greatest threat to Game Boy world domination? And what do you think could save us?

The answer to the first question is undoubtedly the Lynx – forget about the Game Gears and NEC hand-helds, it's the Lynx that has suddenly sprung from nowhere in America following Atari's dramatic price cut of the machine to the equivalent of £45. That, in the States, makes it just £5 more expensive than the Game Boy – so no wonder the ignorant savages are pestering mummy to come up with extra five nicker.

However, this is actually good news for us Game Boy owners because it almost certainly means that the cost of Game Boys is going to drop in the fairly near future, enlarging the market and bringing even more games onto the shelves as a result.

If you're wondering what the Game Boy secret weapon is (apart from better software) it's still the great battery life. And, if you haven't yet realised, don't forget you can increase the battery life noticeably by always playing with the sound turned off.

NEW GAMES

Meanwhile, it's still the software that makes the GB such a good buy. Latest promised additions to the range include PacMan (yay!) and Kick Off (double yay!!). Kick Off won't be with us till the autumn, but the magic here is that we're promised multi-player capability (up to SIX players) and all the features that made the original so enthralling. We can expect to see other Anco products on the system later, including possibly the new Anco basketball game, Tip Off.

While in the States recently we played a copy of Chessmaster 2000. If you've been looking for a good chess game for the Game Boy, effectively turning it into a portable chess machine for less than most dedicated models. look no further. Chessmaster 2000 has digitised speech, dramatic sound effects, and numerous playing options.

The options range from 16 levels of play to solving mates (up to five moves ahead) and include a tutorial mode for novice players. The skill levels are sensibly defined according to the amount of time the GB will take to compute its moves, so you don't get into that infuriating situation where you specify a skill level and then wait for hours, wondering when the machine is going to move.

There is one drawback, however, to Chessmaster 2000 that bodes ill for other GB chess applications, and that's the display. Although it's reasonably clear in good light, it's very tiring to look at for the sustained periods of time required by anything other than extremely elementary chess. Although the display is pretty neat, I can't help feeling that the graphics designers couldn't have come up with an alternative display system that was easier on the eyes.

FROM YOU TO YOU

Several readers have sent in tips and mini reviews this month. Matthew Ng of Birkenhead suggests that in Golf you can retake your shot again and again if you 'reset' the machine (by pressing all the buttons simultaneously) after messing up the shot but before the ball stops rolling. Nice one, Matthew...

Calum Haswell of Inverness tells us that in Turtles you can replenish your energy by pausing the game, then pressing UP twixe, DOWN twice, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, then pressing button B, then A. You can also increase the difficulty level in Super Mario Land by first completing the game and then, when it says THE END, pressing START.

Mike Walpole has been getting his money's worth out of Bugs Bunny – he's sent us the codes for all the levels, which alas we don't have room to print. Try XHO2 for level 80, however! Mike also points out that you can increase the speed of the game while playing by pressing SELECT during the action. And that's all, folks!

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ACE 05/91

HOT OFF THE SHELF

May comes but once a year, so what better reason can there be for buying a saucy piece of software? Okay, fair enough, all the months come once a year, but you've got to have an excuse haven't you?

So here's another *Hot of the Shelf* to help you make that purchasing decision. It's the place to find out what we've rated top over the last three months, plus those classic titles that you MUST have for your rad hot-box.

AWESOME

Psygnosis ● Amiga £34.99

A shoot-'em-up where you'll need to master four different gameplay styles if you're to survive. The first is similar to *Asteroids*, except that here your ship stays stationary and the aliens and rocks rotate about you. Next is a *Space Harrier*-like battle against a giant space dragon. After that you pilot your ship over the multi-directional parallax scrolling surface of an alien world, shooting aliens and searching for the landing bay. Finally there's a *Gauntlet*-style run around the starbase looking for the entrance to the space station. The graphics wouldn't look out of place in an arcade. A stunning game, if a little derivative, and well worth its ACE rating.

★ **ACE RATING 900 ON AMIGA**

BATTLE CHESS 2

Electronic Arts ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £29.99

Sequel-itis spreads from Hollywood to the computer industry! This time round the rules are based on the Chinese variant of Chess, which introduces some new moves, has a river bisecting the board (which some pieces can't cross) and limits the King's movement to an 'Imperial Palace'. As before the board is viewed in 3D, with all the pieces 'taking' each other in a variety of amusing and well-animated ways. While a bit slow and irritating running from floppies due to all the disc swapping , a hard disc shows the game to be far faster and more lethal than normal Chess. A good purchase for jaded Chess fans.

★ **ACE RATING 895 ON IBM PC**

BATTLE COMMAND

Ocean ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST ● PC £29.99

The latest solid-polygon epic from Realtime. You control a Mauler tank through 16 tough missions, varying from straightforward seek and destroy to escorting a convoy of supply trucks to picking up a downed satellite in enemy territory. Although the accent is on action, several of the missions require quite a bit of thought to complete. During your travels you'll encounter a wide variety of enemy craft, all rendered in exceptionally fast 3D. A little more originality, next time okay?

★ **ACE RATING 899 ON AMIGA AND ATARI ST**

BOULDERDASH

Victor Musical Industries ● Gameboy ¥3400 (Import)

Yet another steal from the C64 catalogue of great games. Hey kids, remember this? Guide cute and cuddly Rockford around umpteen (that's journo-speak for more than can be counted on one hand) mazes of boulders and meanies in pursuit of diamonds. But bear in mind that digging around boulders can make them tumble down on your head! An arcade puzzle game of the most addictive kind and yet another game ideally suited to the B&W handheld wonder.

★ **ACE RATING 908 ON GAMEBOY**

CAPTIVE

Mindscape ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST/E £24.99 ● PC £29.99

Another in the ever expanding number of RPGs portrayed using first-person perspective. *Captive*, written by veteran programmer Tony Crowther, pits you against hordes of rampaging aliens, with nothing to defend you but a briefcase. This briefcase, however, contains a computer giving you remote control over a four-droid team with which you must free yourself from the fortress where you are imprisoned. Excellent bitmapped graphics, atmospheric real-time stereo sound and a total of 65000 levels to explore place *Captive* very much in the ACE-rated category.

★ **ACE RATING 930 ON AMIGA**

F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER

Microprose ● Atari ST £29.99 ● Amiga £29.99 ● PC £39.99

A program that could well be described as the Flight Simulator's Flight Simulator. The PC version has enjoyed much success since its launca year ago, and now released on the ST and Amiga. The sim is based around the much talked about (or perhaps that be whispered about) Stealth Fighter. It boasts four huge scenarios with hundreds of missions, and plenty of detail. If you are looking for the definitive flight sim, then you can't go far wrong with this.

★ **ACE RATING 935 ON IBM PC**

FLAMES OF FREEDOM: MIDWINTER 2

Microprose ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● IBM PC £TBA

Now this is a challenge; how do you sum up a huge game like *FoF*? The big thaw has set in, and Midwinter is now Agora, the island HQ of the Atlantic Federation. You play one of their crack agents with the task of scuppering an impending attack by the evil Saharan Empire. The majority of the game takes place in a massive solid-3D world, with your spy able to use any mode of transport he/she may come across, evrything from foot to helicopter. But this is no shoot-'em-up. There's more than enough strategy and subterfuge to keep any non-arcade fan happy. A major contender for game of the year - already!

★ **ACE RATING 950 ON ATARI ST**

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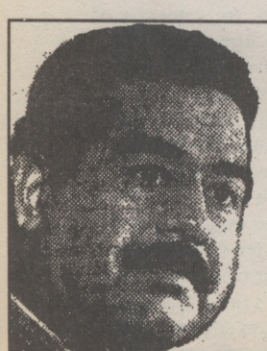

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4D SPORTS BOXING
Mindscape ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £24.99
This violent clash between two solid-polygon generated pugilists is the best rendition of the 'noble art' yet seen on a home computer. The use of polygons allows the action to be viewed from absolutely any angle, and a video playback option allows you to watch that decisive upper-cut again and again. Highly realistic, with a huge range of moves and a lot of work to be put in if you're to become World Champ!
★ **ACE RATING 900 ON IBM PC**

IVAN 'IRONMAN' STEWART'S SUPER OFF ROAD
Virgin ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99● PC £24.99
A hugely enjoyable rollicking romp through 8 courses of rough 'n' tumble driving action, viewed in the overhead style championed by Atari's *Super Sprint.* All boy racers should look no further. Another stunning game from the consistently excellent Graftgold, authors of *Simulcra* and *Paradroid 90.*
★ **ACE RATING 870 ON IBM PC**

JOHN MADDEN'S FOOTBALL
Electronic Arts ● Megadrive £39.99
What a game! The definitive US footy game yet available on any home system. The graphics are superbly realistic - as is the gameplay - and the excitement is non-stop. The sampled grunts and groans add to the action. If you're a Megadrive owner then you'd be a mug to miss this. Set out for your software shop right now!
★ **ACE RATING 904 ON SEGA MD**

KINGS QUEST V
Sierra ● Amiga £TBA ● Atari ST £TBA ● IBM PC £39.99(EGA), £44.99(VGA)
The latest in the popular series, and typing is now a thing of the past because all interaction is via a series of multiple-choice menus. You have to guide King Graham of Daventry through yet another fantasy land in search of his castle, kidnapped by the wicked magician Mordack. However, the messages are sickeningly cute at times, and those with a low sweetness threshold may choke on *KQ5.* Others should enjoy this romp through 9.7 Mb of excellent animated graphic adventure.
★ **ACE RATING 850 ON IBM PC**

LEMMINGS
Psygnosis ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● PC £24.99
In an age of ever-faster vector graphics and smoother parallax scrolls, Psygnosis was the last company expected to release a simple-looking game based on the suicidal tendencies of some cutesy little rodents. The object of the game is beautifully straightforward - you must guide a certain number of randomly-meandering lemmings to safety from one end of a peril-strewn level to the other.. You can endow chosen lemmings with a range of special abilities, such as climb or dig, with which you can get them past traps and obstacles. Incredibly playable and addictive, it's a game that will hopefully encourage programmers to spend as much time on a game's gameplay as its graphics.
★ **ACE RATING 910 ON AMIGA**

PIPE DREAM
El/Lucasfilm ● Gameboy £25 (Import)
Most readers will probably be more familiar with this game under its original title of *Pipemania.* All the action takes place on a 10 x 7 grid. Using a cursor you have to drop varying sections of piping onto the grid, with the aim of making a pipeline for 'flooz' to flow down. Should the flooz leak before it has passed through a set number of pipe sections then it's game over. Later levels introduce directional pipes (the flooz MUST flow a certain way) and obstacles. Infuriatingly addicitive - it's the sort of game the Gameboy was designed for.
★ **ACE RATING 910 ON GAMEBOY**

POWERMONGER
Electronic Arts ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99
A new computer classic, with the highest ACE rating ever. You play a warlord, exiled from your homeland along with twenty followers, who has just landed on the shores of 200 islands, ripe for conquering.
Unfortunately the current residents are not quite so keen on your enforced leadership, and will do all they can to resist you. Using a similar viewpoint to

Populous, the landscape is here polygon-based and thus can be manipulated in just about any way you require. The excellent visuals are supported by highly atmospheric sound. All control is by mouse, and couldn't be easier. To play it is to worship it. An absolutely essential buy.
★ **ACE RATING 973 ON AMIGA**

PRINCE OF PERSIA
Broderbund/Domark ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● IBM PC £24.99
A game that could so easily go unnoticed and unloved by the shelf-scouring hordes looking for the latest licence. The graphics, when static, are fairly unimpressive (although they do get better on the later levels), but when they move... The animation as you guide a young Prince through umpteen levels of platforms, pits, spikes and swordsmen is quite excellent and life-like. And the gameplay, although it may sound uninspired, is as good as the graphics. Some of the action has a real cliff-hanger aspect to it. A real little gem.
★ **ACE RATING 915 ON AMIGA**

RISE OF THE DRAGON
Sierra/Dynamix ● PC £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99
An entertaining and graphically superb - if little short-lived - adventure. Set in the gloomy pollution-ridden city of Los Angeles circa 2053, you play private 'tec 'Blade' Hunter. The Mayor's daughter has been killed by some duff narcotics, the cops are chasing their own tails and it's up to you to get to the bottom of the drug-peddling scam. All game interaction is controlled by simple point-and-click, either to use or examine objects in rooms or to select conversation dialogue with other characters from multiple-choice menus. Each location is depicted in superb style, with some very atmospheric graphics. The only *caveat* is that even moderately-accomplished adventurers will find the task a bit easy.
★ **ACE RATING 850 ON IBM PC**

SAVAGE EMPIRE
Origin/Mindscape ● PC £34.99 ● Amiga £TBA
Using the *Ultima VI* interface, Origin have taken a side-step from the medieval world of their previous games, and now plunge you into a nightmare scenario where you control a party of characters mysteriously transported to a dinosaur-infested Lost World. A good yarn well told and - hard to believe I know - actually *better* than *Ultima VI*.
★ **ACE RATING 955 ON IBM PC**

SPEEDBALL 2
Mirrorsoft ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £TBA
The sequel to the Bitmap Bros' violent '88 hit. Basically more of the same but with improved graphics, a bigger multi-directional scrolling pitch (festooned with bumpers and ball energisers), extra power-ups and armour to pick up or buy between games, smoother control and a depth-enhancing player-manager element. Highly playable, and the power-ups do have a noticeable affect on the game. The Amiga version, in particular, is superbly atmospheric, mainly thanks to the sample-laden sound effects.. More fun than beating up your kid brother.
★ **ACE RATING 903 ON AMIGA**

STRIDER
Sega/Virgin ● Megadrive £39.95
This coin-op conversion was reviewed some time ago on home computer. Thankfully, the Megadrive incarnation is supremely superior - if you didn't know better you'd swear you were playing the arcade machine. Strider Hiryu has to jump and tumble through levels of acrade-perfect action. Stunning for its graphics, sound and gameplay, *Strider* is a must-buy for any Megadrive owner.
★ **ACE RATING 919 ON SEGA MD**

SUPER MARIOLAND
Nintendo ● Super Famicom (inc. with grey-import console)
Could this be the best platform game available? The game follows the seemingly never-ending adventures of Mario, as he jumps and joy-rides his way through 99 sub-levels of platform action. What makes the game so special - apart from its superlative graphics, stunning sound FX (the echo in the caves has to be heard to be believed) and super-satisfying - is the never-ending variety in the gameplay; it's not all just running and jumping. Complete

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this and you can consider yourself a real games supremo. The best reason for splashing out on the Famicom is here.

★ **ACE RATING 910 ON FAMICOM**

SUPER MONACO GP

US Gold ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● PC £TBA

A superb conversion of the coin-op - what else could you expect from the enigmatic but oh-so-talented ZZKJ, the man behind such technically-stunning games as *Super Hang-On* and *Powerdrift*. Everything you want from a racing game is there - a sense of speed (with some *huge* roadside features whizzing by), a throaty roar from the engine, good control reponse, tricky courses and intelligently-driving opponents. The only place it falls down in comparison to, say, Gremlin's *Lotus*, is in the lack of courses. But as the review said, *SMGP* is well up with the leaders.

★ **ACE RATING 871 ON AMIGA**

TEAM SUZUKI

Gremlin ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £24.99

Gremlin go from strength to strength with this marvellous bike game. The action is depicted using amazingly fast 3D polygon graphics, allowing a greater degree of realistic modelling for the bike's performance. Control is is very responsive - perhaps a little too responsive, which can make play frustrating at first. THE bike game for the Amiga - but remember that you'll need to put in a small amount of effort to begin with.

★ **ACE RATING 900 ON AMIGA**

TURRICAN 2

Rainbow Arts ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99

There are some games that you've got to have, the original *Turrican* was one of them. It proved that, given the right programmers, the Amiga could do anything an arcade machine could do and better. The sequel, though still an excellent game, is perhaps a little to similar - i.e shoot everything - to its predecessor to become a classic in its own right. However, anyone looking to relive that old magic or has yet to discover it afresh can do no wrong forking out £25 for this. The Atari ST version (rated at 898) is especially worthy of mention for its superb graphics, which are nearly on par with the Amiga's.

★ **ACE RATING 899 ON AMIGA**

WING COMMANDER

Origin/Mindscape ● Amiga £TBA ● PC £34.99

Another 3D space combat game, but radically uses of stunning ray-traced and digitised graphics for the spaceships. They rotate, shrink and grow with amazing speed and fluidity. Animated scenes punctuate the action and present the first true cinematic experience on a home computer. The multitude of missions mean this isn't a game of surface gloss. Sadly only on PC at the moment, and then best appreciated on the high speed models.

★ **ACE RATING 949 ON IBM PC**

WONDERLAND

Magnetic Scrolls ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99 ● PC £34.99

The Scrolls, having stunned the world with *The Pawn* way back in 1987, return with a new classic. An adventure game based on the famous novel *Alice in Wonderland*, the plot follows the book enough to retain its weird flavour but not so slavishly as to make it solvable by simply knowing the story. The lavish text, teeming with hundreds of tough (but logical) puzzles, is accompanied by a number of stunning animated graphic scenes. All adventure fans kneel and pray - an essential buy.

★ **ACE RATING 910 ON IBM PC**

WRATH OF THE DEMON

Empire ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99 ● PC £29.99 ● Macintosh £29.99 ● C64 £TBA

A highly-polished *Shadow of the Beast 2* beater. The plot is yer usual slay-the-demon-and-win-a-princess effort, but the superlative graphics and audio, combined with enjoyable, if ultimately shallow, gameplay. The game is split into 'scenes', each with a different style, i.e. left/right horizontal scroller or *Barbarian*-style hack-'em. This variety helps sustain long;asting interest.

★ **ACE RATING 884 ON AMIGA**

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BOOK SHOP

Sandra Vogel rounds up some titles of interest to the computer games enthusiast – or simply for those in search of a good read. Get the low-down on bugs (the blood-sucking kind), comms, and some superlative collector's artwork...

THE CHRIS FOSS PORTFOLIO

Paper Tiger £9.95
Art

The Chris Foss Portfolio is one of a series of collections of the work of some of the greatest fantasy artists. The book is no more or less than a collection of full colour pictures - 28 of them in all, and a short biography of the artist.

You may recognise some of the pictures in the book from the covers of science fiction or other books but, even if you don't, the style will be familiar as Foss is one of the most imitated fantasy artists this side of the Crab Nebula. You may also have come across his work in other media without realising it – he has worked on the films Superman, Flash Gordon, and Alien, and even once produced a front cover illustration for the now-defunct Personal Computer Games magazine, commemorating the launch of Legend's The Great Space Race. If only the game had been as good as the illustration!

GENERAL COMMENT
The only problem with this book is where you are going to store it – it's A3, twice the size of this issue of ACE!

IQ FACTOR	3
SHELF LIFE	9
VALUE FOR MONEY	7
OVERALL	6

BUGS

Theodore Roszak
Granada
Horror

Bugs is the story of what happens if you let computers have too much power. It is set in the not too distant future, in the good old US of A. the action starts at the National Centre for Data Control, better known as The Brain. This is a massive computer located in Washington DC. It contains enough hardware to control just about every aspect of government and administration – and that is precisely what it does.

The fun starts when creepy crawlies, apparently made of silicon, start to emerge from various computer innards. These are the bugs of the title. They seem to be generated by the computers themselves, and their favourite snack is, yes, human blood. Yeuck!

As far as I know this is the only full length horror scenario that centres on computers and it stands up well with others of its type. Unfortunately, it is not in print at the moment but is well worth while keeping your eyes open for in second hand bookshops – I picked up my copy for a quid.

GENERAL COMMENT
Just when you thought it was safe to switch on your computer...

IQ FACTOR	5
SHELF LIFE	4
VALUE FOR MONEY	N/A
OVERALL	6

THE COMMS BOOK

Edited by Dennis Jarrett
Sigma Press £12.95
Technical

The Comms Book not only covers just about everything to do with computer communications, but it does this in a way even the complete novice can understand. A large number of contributors have written about the aspects of comms that they know best, and the result is an informative guide which manages to avoid that technical overkill which leaves many of us cold.

The book covers numerous areas from the general to the specific. It starts by giving you the low down on different kinds of modem and software, and goes on to talk about many other topics including electronic mail, Bulletin Boards, telex, online information, Prestel, and transferring files via comms to name but a few.

The book also covers those essential technical bits like ISDN and PCM – but in an easy-to-follow fashion. Although the book is primarily aimed at PC users, it is relevant to any computer users wanting to take their first steps in the wide world of communications.

GENERAL COMMENT
Never again need you say you don't know your baud from your board!

IQ FACTOR	7
SHELF LIFE	9
VALUE FOR MONEY	7
OVERALL	7

MEMOIRS OF A SPACE TRAVELLER

Stanislaw Lem
Mandarin £4.99
Science Fiction

This book is the selected memoirs of veteran cosmonaut Ijon Tichy. Well, actually, the book is a collection of short stories, but good old Ijon occurs in all of them, so that there is a common thread for those of us who have trouble with the usually disjointed appearance of short stories.

The tales are very tongue in cheek and while some deal with serious matters, others had me laughing raucously (very embarrassing on the tube, I can tell you!). My two favourites were first the one about sending an alternative proto-atom (the single atom from which the universe was created) back in time to create a new improved human race, and the one about two manufacturers competing to produce the ultimate intelligent washing machine!

There are also short stories about time machines, the creation of life, the fate of a race called the Phools, the story of a man who claimed to have preserved the soul of his dead wife in a matchbox...

GENERAL COMMENT
A cut above the usual sci-fi, this collection is both humorous and thought provoking.

IQ FACTOR	5
SHELF LIFE	7
VALUE FOR MONEY	6
OVERALL	7

VISIONS OF SPACE

David A Hardy
Dragons World £10.95
Art

Visions of Space is an illustrated history of the development of space art from the nineteenth century to the present day. The book shows how real pictures brought back by various space probes have affected how artists see the cosmos.

The book contains full colour pictures whose subjects range from the moon to Mars and from solar eclipses to space stations. Over sixty artists are included in the 150 page book, and many of the pictures take a full page. The commentary on the pictures is informative without being intrusive, and as if all that is not enough, the book also contains a bibliography so that you can take your interest further.

GENERAL COMMENT
With a foreward by Arthur C Clarke, this book is a treat from beginning to end.

IQ FACTOR	4
SHELF LIFE	8
VALUE FOR MONEY	8
OVERALL	7

ATTENTION PUBLISHERS!

ACE reviews books on a regular basis. If you have a title suitable for our readers, send a review copy to the Editorial address (see contents page) for the attention of Steve Cooke.

SHOP WATCH

Software seller Dirk Longhorn mourns the passing of Activision UK...

One of the better flight-sims released in the last eighteen months was, I thought, Fighter Bomber, by Activision. It was fairly easy to get to grips with and reached a good compromise in the 'good ground detail/slow screen update' vs 'boring terrain/fast screen update' predicament, which so many others seem to get lost in. What made it really attractive to me, though, was the option to design and save your own missions. This meant that, quite possibly for the first time, the user could customise a flight-sim to his own requirements and capabilities; also, users could set missions for other users - an exciting concept which, when thought about, suggested all kinds of intriguing situations.

Unfortunately, the program had quite serious flaws - at least in the early versions. One in particular of the 'official' missions in the game was impossible to finish, which meant that the player could not play the missions which came after it. Even more disappointingly, the user-defined missions could not be saved.

Activision, to their credit, realised that there was a problem and set up a help-line for distressed purchasers and promised to exchange all faulty product if returned directly to them: great idea, but there were instances of users receiving replacement copies identical to the ones they had originally sent. Many people gave up on the game altogether, either throwing it to the back of their software collection of trying to get their retailer to exchange the game for a different one: 'one that works', as one particularly irate gentleman sneered at me. Retailers removed the product from their shelves in some cases, choosing not to believe assurances that the product was 'fixed'.

Being one of the early users of the product and, consequently, one of the army of dissatisfied customers, I lost interest. To me, the experience was like coming home to find your wife of three days in bed with the local rugby team – it may not happen again, but the damage has been done.

So what has all this got to do with anything? Well, early last week I was talking to a customer who I got to know during the Bomber fiasco. He was saying that since that time he has not, as a matter of principle, purchased any Activision products nor would he ever again. I tried to gently remonstrate with him, pointing out the truly innovative products that the company produced which, on reflection, very few others would or could have due to 'commercial considerations' (i.e. they were neither coin-ops nor film tie-ins). Titles such as Shanghai, Little Computer People, Portal, and Alter Ego spring to mind here.

I was promptly accused of living in the past after this – the customer in question forcefully reminded me that, with a few honourable exceptions, the publisher's recent output had bee predominantly arcade titles such as Galaxy Force, R-Type, Afterburner, and Power Drift and that the company had not published anything 'good and original' for years. I must admit, it was hard to disagree.

Regrettably, Activision are no longer with us in the form we once knew. I don't know what their new owners (The Disc Company) intend doing with the company, but fear it will probably be 'just' Nintendo and MS-DOS. Those of us lucky enough to own some of the early products (Amiga Shanghai is absolutely superb and Activision were brave enough to publish this title in 1986 before the A500 was even launched. The visual impact of this product is as strong today as then and it remains the definitive version of the board game.) should remember with affection and gratitude the commercially misguided people who unleashed such products which have given so much pleasure and and satisfaction. I fear we will not see their like again.

To end on a slightly more cheerful note, Psygnosis must be congratulated on the release of a 'good and original' game with their wonderful Lemmings. It has caused many a discussion between retailers and customers who are addicted to it. I cannot remember when a game was last released that caused so many people to smile at the mention of its name. Try it. Ask someone if they have played Lemmings – if they have they will instantly smile. Products like this are wonderful for the computer industry and I would love to see more with such 'smile appeal'!

● *Dirk Longhorn*

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ADVENTURELINE

Pat Winstanley checks out an adventure generator for the Amiga and doles out some tips

HATRACK II

Heyley Software (061-427-2901)

This month I've been having a good look at *Hatrack II* which had a brief mention a few months ago. An interactive adventure generator for the Amiga, *Hatrack* has several features which make it both flexible and easy to use.

Adventure generators fall into two main types. Interpreted ones such as *STAC* allow you to test the game as you go along, swapping between adventure and editor at will. Compiled generators such as *PAW* (PCW version) have the running game and the editing side quite separate so that small adjustments require a full recompilation every time.

Hatrack II (why on earth is it called that?) is of the interpreter type and the friendliest of this style I have ever seen. While working on a game the adventure itself runs in one window, over which editing windows can be dropped temporarily for adjustments. When editing is complete the new window is simply wiped out leaving the game running from where it was stopped but with modifications now made.

This use of windows has other advantages too. Imagine you are coding a puzzle (condition) and can't remember the number of the message you want to use. With this program all you need do is pull yet another window on screen to scroll through the whole list. Having found the number simply pop the window out of the way and carry on editing.

Another useful feature is that when defining an object you are asked for the word by which that object will be recognised. This is then automatically inserted in the word list where later you can add any synonyms required – quite a time saver and avoids the mismatch between the spelling of an object and its associated noun which so often happens.

Included with the system is a default adventure (like *STAC*'s Quickstart file) which contains all the standard vocabulary, messages, conditions etc. to get you started. These are all editable by the user to help in customising your game. Probably the first entry to be customised is that for describing a room. The default condition thoughtfully saves you having to type "You are" by providing it as a message. I can't think of anything more boring than having the same intro to every room! It is very easy to change, simply remove all reference to that message in the puzzle code.

As to the code itself, it is very similar to Basic (without line numbers) with commands such as IF/THEN/ELSE, LOOP, FOR/NEXT etc. These don't seem to be as extensive as in many other systems but are quite flexible and will do virtually anything you want. Twelve system variables are predefined and you can add your own too, again giving them a name. This is much clearer than having to refer to them by number although you can do so if you wish.

As for capacity, objects, locations and messages can have 999 in each category. You're likely to run out of memory first. The game screen can be customised to run in different colours, different res etc and you can even have an on-screen compass or perhaps a list of command words to be accessed by the player using a mouse. The parser handles inputs like "Give the silver and gold coins to the troll and then run" or "Take everything except the blue key". Words like IT or THEM can be used to refer to the last object named too. For instance "Unlock the door then open it".

Anyone who has used an adventure creator before should find little difficulty coming to grips with *Hatrack II* as the language used is pretty standard. Newcomers might find things a little more difficult unless they are used to a language such as Basic – but you don't need to be an expert. If you have an idea what the sample commands above do in Basic you'll have little trouble with this.

Obviously the system will not write an adventure for you – nothing will – but even the beginner should be able to produce good results by following the tutorial in the manual (which is very comprehensive) and trying things out. Simply leave the default settings as they stand and add your rooms, objects and puzzles. The expert will be able to fiddle about and revamp the system as much as desired – plenty of opportunity to give a game your personal style.

Although this is a text only system there is a chance that graphic facilities may be available later but who needs them? If you want to write adventures on the Amiga then *Hatrack II* is well worth a look – it's certainly set my fingers itching again.

Hatrack II costs £29.95 and is available from Heyley Software, 27 Winnington Road, Marple, Stockport. SK6 6PD.

SIERRA HELPLINE

Stuck in a Sierra game? A new telephone helpline has been announced on 0734 304004 which offers help on a variety of games. You'll need a push-button phone to access it as the system is under 24 hour computer control.

HINTS & TIPS

TRINITY

You can't walk on the grass but you can ride over it on the pram. Use the umbrella as a sail – but feed the birds to change wind direction first.

Take the moveable part of the sundial before you cross the grass. You'll need to find an alternative resting place for it to open doors on the other side.

The lizard doesn't like light so use one either side of it for immobilization.

Swimming in soapy water is useful in space.

CHRONOQUEST

Find a light source in the safe and a better one in the chapel.

SPELLBREAKER

Inscribe the cubes as you like but it helps to make some reference to the location. If at any time you are unable to cast a spell, learn it again, wait then cast it again. At times you will be too tired to learn spells so you must sleep. Since this increases the number of moves taken try to wait as long as possible before sleeping.

CHAOS STRIKES BACK

The point where you start is a pressure switch – once you've killed the worms in the room, stepping on that square generates more! About halfway along the wall opposite the torch holder is a false wall where the worms won't chase you and there's some useful armour there too. Put the torch in its holder for another exit – but look out for flying things!

Note: The final instalment of the Zak McKracken solution will be printed next month.

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ACE DIARY

APRIL 1991

7-13 APRIL SOFTWARE RELEASES

Virgin: *Viz* (CPC, £14.99 tape, £19.99 disk). Race game played for laughs between characters from notorious comic. *Judge Dredd* (CPC, Spectrum £14.99 tape, £19.99 disk). Law enforcement in Mega City One.

Spectrum Holobyte: *Flight of the Intruder* (ST, Amiga, £24.99).

Image Works: *Champion of the Raj* (ST, Amiga, PC £24.99). This one keeps slipping: follow the course of the British Raj in India.

Millennium: *Horror Zombies from the Crypt* (PC £29.99). Spooky goings-on in haunted castle.

US Gold: *Links* - additional courses (PC £TBA). More courses in 256-colour VGA from the same team which brought you *Leaderboard*.

Sunday 7
Monday 8
Clint Eastwood became mayor of Carmel, California, on this day in 1986.
Tuesday 9
Wednesday 10
Thursday 11
1939: Darts were banned in Glasgow pubs for being "too dangerous".
Friday 12
Yuri Gagarin became the first man to fly in space on this day in 1961.
Saturday 13

14-20 APRIL SOFTWARE RELEASES

Virgin: *Spirit of Excalibur* (ST, Amiga £29.99, PC £34.99). Survive against the Saxons in mediaeval tale set in Post-Arthurian Britain. Infocom's *Zork 3* (ST, Amiga, PC £9.99). Completes Infocom's classic trilogy.

Empire: *Mega Traveller* 1 (ST, Amiga £29.99, PC £34.99). Strategy and trading game based on Games Designer Workshop's Mega Traveller.

Ubi Soft: *BAT* (CPC disk £24.99, PC £29.99). Trading, arcade, exploration. *Pro Tennis Tour 2* (ST £24.99, PC £29.99). Sequel to last year's enjoyable tennis sim.

Sunday 14
FA Cup semi-finals: Arsenal vs Tottenham Hotspur at Wembley, 12.00pm; Notts Forest vs West Ham 2.00pm. European Computer Trade Show opens at Islington Business Design Centre. While this event is not open to the general public, rest assured you'll hear plenty about it. This is where many summer titles are previewed, budget release deals sewn up, and game gongs awarded.
Monday 15
Anniversary of the worst-ever disaster at sea: the sinking of the Titanic in 1912.
Tuesday 16
Wednesday 17
National Day, Syria.
Thursday 18
Friday 19
Saturday 20
Snooker: Embassy World Professional Championship opens at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield.

21-27 APRIL SOFTWARE RELEASES

Virgin: Saracon (C64, £14.99, ST, Amiga, PC £24.99). Puzzle game.

Microprose: Railroad Tycoon (ST, Amiga £29.99). Build up your empire and get rich quick in the days of the great railway boom.

Electronic Arts: *Hound of Shadow* (PC £29.99). First time on PC for this atmospheric graphic adventure.

Ubi Soft: *Brainblasters* (C64 tape £9.99, ST, Amiga, PC £24.99). Teasing puzzle game.

Sunday 21
All Formats Computer Fair, National Motorcycle Museum, Birmingham. At last, a show for those outside London: lots of software bargains, lots of user groups and PD libraries displaying their wares (contact number: 0225 868100).
Monday 22
SICOB/Comdex exhibition opens in Paris. Big Euro event for everything from games to business.
Tuesday 23
St George's Day - he of dragon-slaying fame. Patron saint not only of England, but also of soldiers and boy scouts.
Wednesday 24
Thursday 25
ANZAC Day in Australia and New Zealand.
Friday 26
MIDI Music Show opens at the Novotel, Hammersmith, London W6. Products, demos and seminars for computer musicians (contact number for organisers: 081-549 3444).
Saturday 27
National Day, Sierra Leone Independence Day, Togo. MIDI Music Show (see above).

28 APRIL - 4 MAY SOFTWARE RELEASES

Virgin: *Magnetic Scrolls Collection Vol 1* (ST, Amiga, PC, Archimedes £34.99). Revised release date for classic Scrolls' oldies *Fish, Corruption* and *Guild of Thieves:* same games, new user interface.

Electronic Arts/Interplay: *Dvorak on Typing* (PC £29.99). Not a game but a typing tutor which aims to have you touch typing on Qwerty, Azerty or Dvorak keyboards.

Ubi Soft: *Battle Isle* (ST, Amiga, PC £24.99). Arcade style game much hyped in French press.

Image Works: *Brat* (ST, Amiga £24.99). Cute kid becomes rampaging monster at night in arcade-style hooliganism. *Predator 2* (Spectrum, C64, CPC £10.99 tape, £14.99 disk, ST, Amiga, PC £24.99). Survive the carnage of US drug wars; from the movie of the same name.

Sunday 28
MIDI Music Show (see above).
Monday 29
National Day, Japan (Emperor's birthday).
Tuesday 30
National Day, Netherlands (Official Birthday of Queen Beatrix). Reports of a fire at a reactor in the nuclear power station at Chernobyl were broadcast on this day in 1986.

MAY

Wednesday 1
European Football Championship: Turkey vs England in Turkey; San Marino vs Scotland; Ireland vs Poland in Dublin; N Ireland vs Faroe Islands in Belfast.
Thursday 2
Friday 3
Saturday 4

5 - 11 MAY SOFTWARE RELEASES

Empire: *Wrath of the Demon* (CD-TV £TBA). Empire's bid to be first with finished CD-TV product; graphically-led quest and exploration game.

Microprose: *Gunship 2000* (PC £34.99). Sequel and update to the highly regarded Gunship.

Ubi Soft: *Music Master* (ST, Amiga, PC £TBA). Music composition package: ST and PC versions come complete with the MV16 sound cartridge, as used in Ubi Soft's BAT (see above).

Sunday 5
Monday 6
Bank Holiday UK. 1954: the first sub-four-minute mile was run by Roger Bannister at the Iffley Road track in Oxford.
Tuesday 7
Wednesday 8
Football: UEFA Cup final, first leg.
Thursday 9
National Day, Czechoslovakia
Friday 10
Spring Computer Shopper Show opens at Alexandra Palace, London N22. New products, old ones at bargain prices and lots of discounted computer accessories (contact number 081-868 4466).
Saturday 11
National Day, Laos Spring Computer Shopper Show (see above)

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HELP NEEDED in Rigels Reveng. How do you get out of theKitchen and what is the Screwdriver for? Also how do you get out of the net or complete solution of part one. Write to James Lyon, 18 Barony terrace, Edinburgh. EH12 8RE

HELP WANTED URGENTLY with some games on the C64. The games I need help with are Skate Crazy, Thunder Blade and Combat School. I want to know the cheats, tips and so on so get your pen on a piece of paper and write to Criag Hart 36 Browning Rd, Wyken, Coventry CV2 5HS England.

WILL ANYBODY HELP ME Amongst the games I have is Teenage Mutant Turtles on PC. Please could you give me any passwords that will enable me to cheat as I keep on dying before I get to Shredder. Also for Batman the Movie. Please tell me any paswords and any directions for it. Does anybody know any useful passwords for the game Captain Comic? Any help would be greatly appreciated write to Rupert Chaydowen, manor Cottage, Little Bardfield, Braintree, Essex CM7 4TV Don't hesitate in replying. Thanks.

HELP NEEDED with Dungeon master Lavels 4 to dave 26a Cheetah Hill Rd Staldrive Cheshire SK15 1TU

POOR YOU! Stuck on larry 1,2,3, Space Quest 1,2,3 Kings Quest 1,2,3,4 Police Quest 1,2 Zak McKracken another game? Well stop praying to God for help and write your problems to Doctor Weenie Fruit Boiler, Patry's 32, 984365 Grypskerk, The Netherlands. Doctor Fruitboiler needs YOUR help to solve Maniac mansion, Scape Ghosts and Fish so get writing!

AMIGA Breach 2 Anybody written their own scenarios Please write or ring Tony Bailey 051-523-1441 20 Columban Close Liverpool L30 3SH

HELP PLEASE Atari ST Robocop 2 Level 4 How to cross vats on work D.Smith aged 9 Tel: 0293 785767.

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THE BLITTER END

WATCH THE BIRDIE

The birdie in question is Amstrad's rumoured new games PC. Yes,if current rumours are to be believed, the boys at Romford are once again about to go out for a duck in the 16-bit games market.

OK, so it's monstrously unfair to judge a machine before it's been launched, especially when you have no real idea about what it will be. But those rumours are disturbingly specific about a 286, VGA machine. So let's take the Blitter Time Machine into the future and attend the launch...

It's now October 1991. US games manufacturers, who way back in Fall 1990 decided for all practical purposes that their base target machine was a 12MHz 286 machine have now – especially in view of the recent fall in in 386 prices – upgraded their expectations of their users' hardware to a beefier 386 model.

Anybody who thinks this is unlikely should realise that a chunky 386 PC is ALREADY de rigeur for playing state-of-the-art PC software. A very fast 286 is just about OK...but only just.

Which means that once again Amstrad are in danger of ducking out in the PC games market. Seriously, lads, let's make it a 386. After all, the hot product this Christmas is likely to be either Ultima VII, Wing Commander II (or maybe even III), or Kings Quest VI. Unless your 286 machine is going to run at silly speeds, these are the hot products that are going to look glitchy on your machine – and that will make your machine look pretty glitchy too.

So it's a 386. Now the only other thing we need to add is an optional CD-ROM upgrade for around £199. Impossible? Absolutely not. Tandy are already offering one for $399. Impractical? Absolutely not – there's been a 100% increase in PC CD ROM titles over the last 12 months, and that's likely to translate into a 200% increase over the next 12 months. Sierra are not the only companies offering PC CD ROM titles – by the end of this year almost all major PC software houses will be jumping on the bandwagon. These products will make your machine look extremely unglitchy.

Looks aren't everything, however. You'll need to build in Ad Lib compatibility as well, and ensure that there is an idiot-proof hi-fi interface on the back. You can also market a set of mini-speaker add-ons. In fact, you can be the first manufacturer ever to offer a complete multimedia entertainment system in modular form.

So, if it's a 386 with a CD-ROM option and great sound, then Amstrad will have pulled off the sort of coup that once made them famous, and will have given themselves a hardware platform that will keep them riding high for the next two years or so.

If it's not...quack quack.

*

So, farewell Hewson – at least Hewson in its present form. When the company that brought us Uridium, 3D Seiddab Attack, Nebulus, Paradroid, Eliminator, and Deliverance goes to the wall, you know it really is the end of an era.

What's even more depressing about this is that it's not as if Hewson produced a string of poor products. Take Nebulus, for example. This was universally acknowledged as being a superbly original product that delivered stunning gameplay and addiction. Total sales of the game, at a time when licenses dominated the market, were laughable.

One can't help feeling, however, that Hewson missed a few tricks. Where, for example, is the Nintendo version of Nebulus? Or Paradroid? These deals were apparently sought but don't seem to have come to fruitiion. A pity, because either of these titles on console could have performed very profitably. Perhaps they still will.

*

Finally, talking of consoles, great news for Game Boy owners. Anco are planning a multi-player version of Kick Off for the Nintendo hand-held and Super Famicom, to be released this autumn. Now THAT'S what I call entertainment – and not a film license in sight!

● ***Blit Blit!***

TYRELL SNAPS UP MAJOR ACE

Major Ace, the mythical license property created by this magazine, has been snapped up by software entrepreneur Vince Tyrell for worldwide release on all formats. 'This is going to be THE release of 1991,' claims Tyrell, who is developing the game in conjunction with a '...well-known group of computer technicians from my local software club'. The game, *Major Ace: Back to the Turtles III*, should be available within '...about two weeks' and features a '...stunning horse-riding sequence in a maze of sewers.'

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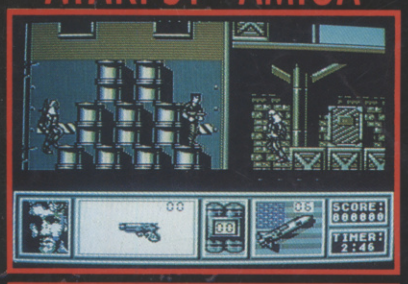

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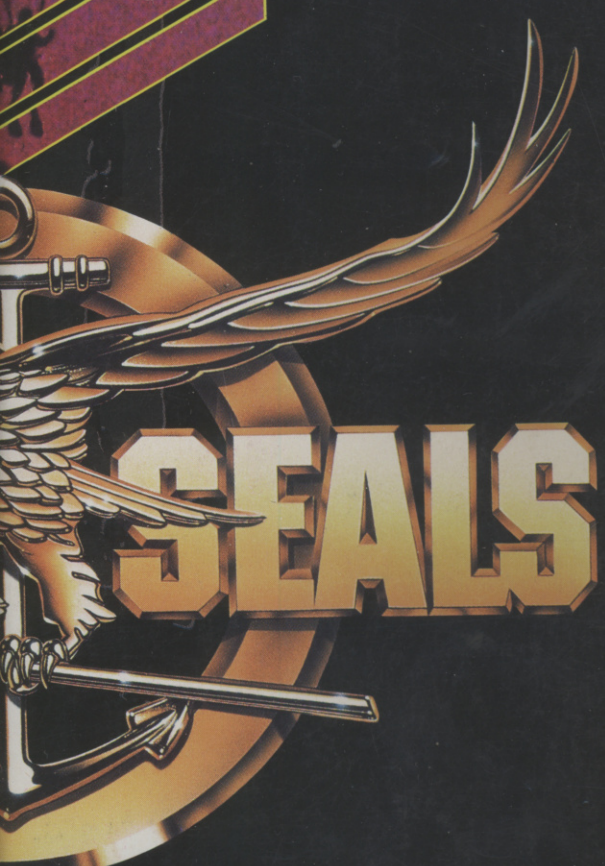

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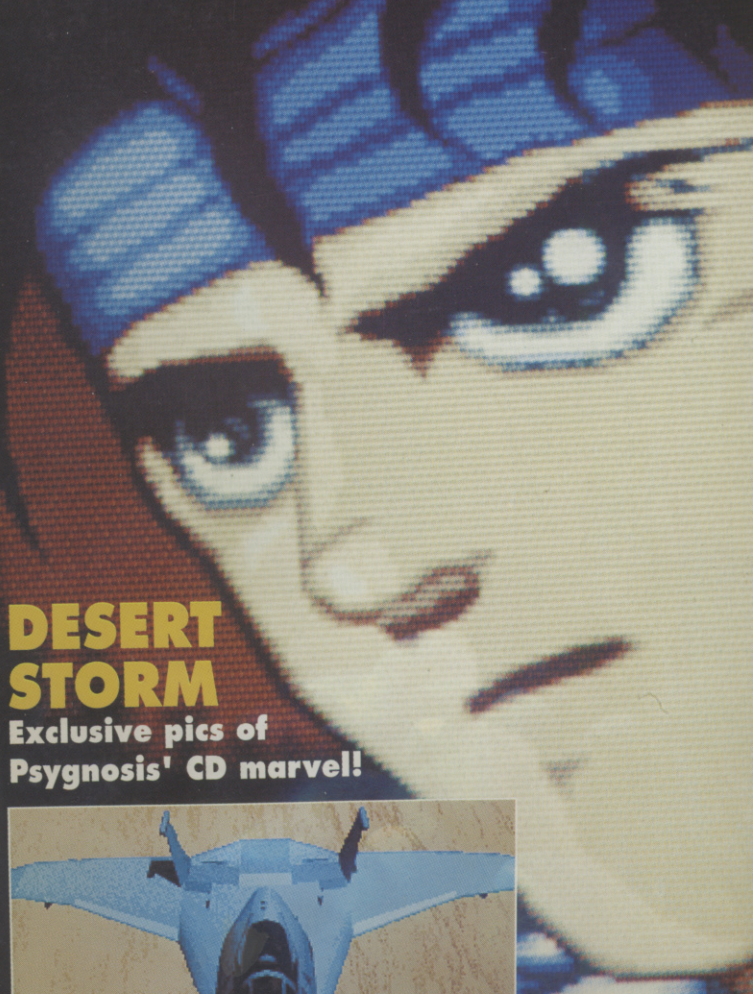

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